

THE AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI'S
VISION OF
ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL
THEOLOGY AND PRAXIS OF
GLOBAL PEACE

EDITED BY PARVIZ
MOREWEDGE



Global Scholarly Publications



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Edited by

Parviz Morewedge

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Contents

Editor's Introduction

The Global Significance of the Universal Message of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, The Honorable Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran*	
Parviz Morewedge.....	i

Essays on Philosophical Theology

The Essence of Unity (Tawhid)—Denial of Servitude but To God.....	1
Iqbal (Liberal Theology of Islam).....	29
The Essence of Art (Religion and Aesthetics).....	49
On Women (On Gender Relations).....	69

Essays on Ethics

On Ethics and Man.....	85
On Justice.....	95
On Human Rights.....	99

Essays on Global Concerns on History, Economics, and Current Challenges to the Youth of the World

Monotheism and Its World View.....	117
Islamic Civilization.....	141
Democracy and Religion	145
On Islam and Christianity.....	155
Private Ownership in Islam.....	177
An Address to University Students	187
To the Youth in Europe and North America	205

Editor's Dedications

I am honored and pleased to dedicate this text to the following scholar-friends-parent who have encouraged me for several years with research and publications of important texts in Islamic Studies

*Ayatollah, Professor Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-i Yazdi,
Professor Mehdi Golshani,
Professor Moshen Eslami,
Professor Edward M. Macierowski,
the late Professor George F. Hourani,
and the late Professor Muhsin Mahdi.*

And to the memory of My Mother,
*Mrs. Gamar al-Sadat Morewedege- Qaim Maqami,
Taba-taba'i*

Editor' Introduction

The Global Significance of the Universal Message of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, The Honorable Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran*

Parviz Morewedge

Let us reflect on the benefits as well as urgency of this publication - selected writing of The Honorable Ayatollah `Ali Khamenei, the present Supreme Leader and the Highest Jurist of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

To begin, this manuscripts provides important data for US educated public, as according to Plato (4th BC) and Nasir Khorsrow (1004-1088), the credibility of a democracy lies in the political wisdom of the electorate to elect public officials to implement their political aspirations. In this context, we may inquire, what are the actual sources of political enlightenment of the general public? Ruled out, is the commercial media, due to economic constraints and the political biases of sponsors, as well as government's censorship. Consequently, the burden--or one may say "the sacred responsibility"--of educating the public lies with scholarly publications and educators. Indeed they are responsible to make available translations of the primary writings of a political global leader -- especially those which are, *prima facie*, in disagreement with our government's official positions. GSP respects the intelligence of the American citizens to judge for themselves a reading of world leaders' views. To that end, it is publishing this collection of the major texts of The Honorable Ayatollah, accepted by His Office for distribution to the Western audience --with very minor editorial changes for the sake of clarity.

I wish to emphasize the significance of the primary source of a political document. It is impossible to present any

“purely objective” interpretation of primary texts – as each person comprehends experience in light of her/his meta-pre-supposition. As we say in Sufism, perception is like a shiny stone –partially an account of an external mind-independent reality and partially one’s own reflection of pre-conceived archetypes. Consequently, let each reader judge the primary text directly without filtration by the commercial media. Here are further clarifications concerning this publication.

GSP has an impressive record of publications of the primary writing of diplomats such as The Honorable Pope(s), Kofi Annan, and heads of states of People’s Republic of China, India, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Syria, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, (previous leaders of) Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), and others. I conjecture three reasons for the salient special significance of IRI, as the center of two transnational forces that necessitate the present publication.

First, is a group of “Farsi language speakers,” extending from Afghanistan, to Tajikistan, and the cities of Bokhara and Samarqand in Uzbekistan. It is a language with one of the richest literary heritages in the globe –being one of the three “poetical languages” of the globe- the others being Chinese and Russian. The peculiar power of each of these three languages lies in its rich poetical tradition that extends beyond the written to the oral mode of mysticism, mythology, and belle letters.

The other, is what is in fact the Shi’a culture-civilization; this entity embodies a substantial majority of inhabitants of Azerbaijan, Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, and minorities of many countries – comprising a sum of over one hundred fifty million followers. In this light, IRI and its affiliates comprise a substantial strategic land and a very active population experienced in centuries of warfare.

It is noteworthy that the Western attempt to curb the nuclear scientific development of Iran is a testimony of the blind following of the dogma of Samuel Huntington’s so-

called “clash of civilization thesis.” He ignorantly designates that “[White] Christian Civilization” should prevent Muslims and Chinese from Westernization in technology without Democratization. Incidentally, in this agenda “democratization” means opening of developing markets to Western oligopolies –the major economic force behind failed attempts of sustaining colonialism and economic imperialism. But Huntington’s dogma has failed in many spheres-such as PRC’s economic growth and Russian Federations explicit rejection of Huntington’s thesis by bringing predominately Muslim nations, such as Kazakhstan and later Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, into alliance in President Putin’s vision of Eurasian Union. These phenomena document that the West (USA and EU) are not alone in the global arena; their encounter with IRI needs to be considered in light of other global players such as the Russian Federation and PRC.

The above reasoning warrants that the present IRI cannot be subdued by Western powers nor isolated from the larger political arena- especially in light of the demographical prediction that, prior to the end of 21st century, the 1.5 billion Muslim population will rise to some 4 billion. Thus, a majority of the world inhabitants will be either Muslim or Chinese. The educated Western public needs to know directly the religious foundation of the framework of Ayatollah’s mind in geo-politics

Here is an example of how this collection may be helpful to the reader. In the treatise on “Unity,” Ayatollah explicitly states that monotheism implies liberation theology, illustrating the dual meaning of Moses encounter with the Pharaoh; first a monotheistic message against idol worshipper and second “justice” that the Jews, as the chosen people, should not be enslaved. This illustrates the official position of Shi’a clergy –the principle of tolerance for people of the book – that Muslims feel morally responsible for protection of religious Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians, so as to facilitate their ability to prac-

tice their own version of monotheism. In this light, according to the Ayatollah, one cannot be a Muslim and anti-Jewish, anti-Christian, or anti-Zoroastrian. Accordingly, whatever one may criticize, IRI's official political position, based on the Quran, cannot be an anti-ethnic agenda as was practiced in the twentieth century in Europe.

In *The Prince*, politically wise Machiavelli, advises the readers, "Men should be embraced or destroyed," a dictum which states genocide, racial and ethnic cleansing, and sanctions can never be sustained. IRI is a reality, and the words of Ayatollah Khamenei express the inner thoughts of the IRI's government and religious groups. To that end, Western citizens need to increase their in-depth knowledge of the Ayatollah's thoughts.

I hope that through this collection the reader will become more familiar with Ayatollah's vision of the globe.

Essays on Philosophical
Theology

The Essence of Unity (*Tawḥīd*) Denial of Servitude but To God

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

The Prophet of Islam announced a slogan: "There is no god but Allah," a pedestal in his profound message towards the emancipation of man. The chieftains and the nobles of the tribes were the prime figures who rose in alarm to confront him. In the beginning, only mocking and censuring served them as primitive tools of animosity. These later turned into so-called effective weapons in line with the progress of the movement of *Tawḥīd* (Divine Unity). Others, under their influence, were also goaded into enmity towards the Prophet and his believers. Here, the shameful episodes of history took place, stretching a span of the thirteen years that preceded the migration. This historical reality reveals a fact, which deserves a cogent consideration towards an acquaintance of Islam and specially *Tawḥīd* (an essential word of Islam, its first and its final).

One of the most pitiful events of our days is the distorted concept of *Tawḥīd*. This should be regarded as a tragedy by all those who have a say in the emancipation of man, because of the bearing of this distortion on the common and most fundamental concept of all the religions. There cannot be found any other concept in the expanse of history that could have been so efficacious in the course of emancipation of man as well as being a harbinger of redemption for the oppressed masses.

In history, as far as we have known, the divine prophecies were movements momentous towards the benefit of mankind, freeing the oppressed from atrocities, discrimination and encroachments.

The moral core of all the great religions, according to Erich Fromm, includes such ideals as knowledge, brotherly love, minimizing human sufferings, independence and responsibility. (Of course, comprehension of ideals that are nobler still, cannot be expected from a materialist observer.) Indeed all these ideals are epitomized in *Tawhīd*. Prophets, while exposing their mission in the slogan focusing on *Tawhīd*, were translating it into reality, following the campaign issued by this slogan. It is, indeed, deplorable for those who believe in *Tawhīd* and its outlook upon the universe and those who are after the above ideals that the concept of *Tawhīd* should remain unknown or an enigma or else be perverted or, if at all conceived, should not go beyond a cursory conception that is merely a mental one at a time when the said ideals are felt more and sought after more than ever.

The earlier confrontations that started with the dawn of Islam reveal an important fact with regards the concepts of *Tawhīd*. That fact is this: the slogan, "There is no god but Allah," was in the very first place a blow fatal to those who had bared the teeth of enmity against it when they were the ruling class of the society. The social orientation of a movement or a thought and the effectiveness of such an orientation can well be conceived through the adversary's reactions to that movement or thought. The very faces of the enemies of a movement will well disclose, upon study, the nature of their affiliations with social strata and thereby the confrontation of that society as a whole in relation to that particular movement or thought. The strength of the enmity is the gauge that determines the strength of the movement. Thus, the study of both the wings, the one of the supporters of the movement and the other of its adversaries, becomes a safe and sane way to gain a true acquaintance with the Divine movements.

When we observe that those classes that are powerful in society have been the first to oppose the call of religions and that they have done the best they could to do this, we

clearly realize that a religion or any religious movement, in its nature, is against these classes. It opposes their lavishness, whether in power or in pelf, and basically any classification that distinguishes them from others.

To ponder into the very concept of *Tawhīd* from this angle, the angle of its opposition to majesty over society, we should necessarily know that *Tawhīd* is not a mere philosophic or noetic theory, as is generally but erroneously presumed. In addition to being a social, economical and political doctrine, it is the very foundation whereupon man is edified and the mammoth mansion of the universe is built.

A term can hardly be found in the terminology of religion or even other terms, so fertile as to enfold so many revolutionary and constructive concepts, as well as covering different aspects of man's social and historical life. It could, therefore, never be just fortuitous that all the Divine solicitations and Divine movements that are so profuse in history did hint and hit at just one point in their proclamations, and that is the Oneness of God: that Divinity is only His and belongs to Him alone. To describe the rays that a prism of *Tawhīd* imparts, we can only epitomize:

1. From the Point of View of its General Outlook upon the Universe:

a) It translates to the effect of a united world and homely uniformity of all its elements.

Since the Creator is one, and everything is originated from one source, since there have not been different gods and creators, creating and then running the world, then all things are elements of one set, and the whole world is one unit with one pursuit. God the Almighty challenges:

“Thou seest not in the creation of the All-merciful any disorder” (Al-Mulk, 67:3).

Again, says the Almighty:

“What, have they not considered within themselves?
God created not the heavens and the earth, and what
is between them, but on a just system, and with a stated
term” (ar-Rūm, 30:8).

From this outlook, the world appears a caravan with pieces connected to each other like a chain and heading towards one direction in unison with a common *conquest so well organized that every item is carefully placed in its due position; or else it might have lost its usefulness. Thus, all are in a journey compact, consistent, constant towards consummation; each a necessity to the other while the remainder rests on such a need as a whole thereby avoiding any sluggishness or deviation which, otherwise, would result in an upset of this whole set-up.

b) *Tawhīd* can also be applied to the objectivity of the creation, and the planning and computed order in the world; to the existence of some sort of dynamism and purpose in all and each part of the world. Since the universe has a wise Creator (wise in its most complete sense that could be a deserving description of the word *Hākīm*, a name among the names of Allah) who has brought it into existence, there is no way but being a wisdom, an ultimate purpose, and a pursuit in the very existence of the world as it is seen and sensed in most of its parts.

“We created not the heaven and the earth, and
whatsoever is between them, as *playing and with no
purpose” (al-Anbiyā’, 21:16).

From this outlook, the world seems to be a machine manufactured for gain and not a thing lost in a wilderness of bewilderment. The very fact as to how it is purports a meaning

and portrays a purpose, which is *[not] to be sought in the origin. It is like a verse that can only be understood by probing into its content, but its existence can never be considered as a matter of chance.

c) *Tawhīd*, moreover connotes the obedience of all the things and the elements of the world before God. Neither a thing nor a regulation in this galaxy is on its own. The rules that run the world and everything existing under their guidance are all in constant obeisance to the divinity of God. Therefore, the existence of the rules and laws in this whole world cannot be considered as a reason to deny God's presence, divinity and His constant control over the world. In this respect the Holy Qur'ān says:

“None is there in the heavens and the earth but he comes to the All-merciful as a servant” (Maryam, 19:93).

“But to Him is what in the heavens and (in) the earth; all to Him (are) obedient” (al-Baqarah, 2:116).

“They measured not God with His true measure. The earth altogether shall be His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens shall be rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him! He (be) exalted above what they associate!” (az-Zumar, 39:67).

2. From the Outlook Consequent upon Studying and Judgment on Man:

a) It is in the sense of the uniformity and equality of human beings in relation to God. He is the Master of all people. Human nature is such that it even *

rescinds from any particularity in his relation with God. No one has any kinship with Him. Hence, all are the same and at parity before God. Also God is not a particular one of a particular nation, group or tribe; and, therefore, the absence of superior avoids the notion of an inferior in creation. It leaves open the scope

for elevation of the human values, which is attainable only through righteousness, a platform whereon to perform good deeds in line with the Divine's desire. This is the only safe route or promising method for man to ascend to the heights of perfection and prosperity. To quote from the Qur'ān:

“And they said, ‘God has taken to Him a son’. Glory be to Him! Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; all obey His will” (al-Baqarah, 2:117).

“And whosoever does deeds of righteousness, being a believer, no *<ingratitude> shall befall his endeavor; We ourselves write it down for him” (al-Anbiyā', 21:94).

“Oh Mankind! We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you” (al-Ḥujurāt, 49:13).

b) It is also in the sense that man is equal in creation and is originated from a single source; this equality also runs in the very vitality of human beings. Different gods do not create those who belong to the various classes in a society. Humanity is a single element that has been equally given to all individuals. So there is no difference in the pulp or in the creation provided to them. As such, there is no boundary between them that cannot be crossed. In other words, the Creator of the higher classes of society is not a God superior to that of the poor ones. All are created by one God, and in creation all are at the same level and equally benefited from the element of humanity. To quote from the Qur'ān:

“Oh mankind! Fear your Lord, Who created you of a single soul” (an-Nisā', 4:1).

c) The equality among human beings carries the same bearing upon the possibility of the elevation and perfection of

individuals, too. The obvious reason is that the human essence is the same in all men, taking its root from one wisdom. This being so, no one is by nature unable to walk the path of perfection. Accordingly, the Divine call is common to all, irrespective of nations or classes. To quote from the Qur'ān:

“We have sent thee not [to a special group] except to mankind, entire” (Sabā', 34:29).

“And We have sent thee for the people a messenger” (an-Nisā', 4:79).

“Oh men, a clear guide has now come to you from your Lord; We have sent down to you a manifest light. As for those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, He will surely admit them to mercy from Him, and bounty, and will guide them to Him on a straight path” (an-Nisā', 4:174,175).

d) It can also be transferred to the release of all human beings from servitude and yielding to anyone but God. This is another interpretation of the essence of complete yielding to God and worshipping Him. Some people, in some way or another, have yielded to the obscene yoke of submission to something other than God, such as mental, cultural, economical, and political slavery. Considering the wide-ranging sense of worship, we can well say that they are immured in service to others like themselves, and thus have taken a rival or an associate to God. Here, *Tawhīd* totally rejects such a way of life and stands firm and adamant to maintain that man is a servant to God alone and emancipates him from that domination, under whatever pretext it be. Therefore, *Tawhīd* is tantamount to denial of any power concealed under whatever color or cloak, and an absolute submission to the absolute authority of God alone. To quote from the Qur'ān:

“Authority belongs only to God; He has commanded

that you shall not serve and worship any but Him. That is the right religion" (Yūsuf, 12:40).

"Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve and worship any but Him" (al-Isrā', 17:23).

e) As such *Tawhīd* is to dignify man; the dignity of man is so lofty that to become servile and resigned to others (aside from God), and to get dominated is an immediate contradiction. Such slavery is in obvious opposition and a crisp contradiction to that dignity.

There is no one who deserves such service except God. He is the only Being, the only perfect Pulchritude in absoluteness that deserves that man should sit in an enchantment of praise and prayer to Him. The kingdom of God, in the vast human life, is invaded without a right, and inroads are made upon the intellect of man by those idols, the living ones or the made-up ones. These idols are, in fact, a product of evil while themselves wicked enough to throw man from the zenith of humanity into the abyss of vileness discarding human value and invalidating its worth. It is incumbent upon man to shun the shame of worshipping or serving them. Materialistic humanism has never been able to establish the originality of man in its due excellence with a delicacy that dives into the depths and lofty sense that splashes therefrom, such as:

"And eschew the abomination of idols, and eschew the speaking of falsehood, being men pure of faith unto God, not associating with Him anything; for whosoever associates with God anything, it is as though he has fallen from heaven and the birds snatch him away, or the wind sweeps him headlong into a place far away" (al-Ḥajj, 22:30, 31).

"Set not up with God another god, or thou wilt sit condemned and forsaken" (al-Isrā', 17:22).

“Set not up with God another god, or thou wilt sit cast into hell, reproached and rejected” (al-Isrā’, 17:39).

f) In this category, another meaning of *Tawhīd* is that a human life is a compound of mind and reality, thought and action. If one of these two, or partially both, gets dominated by anti-Divine powers; in other words, if the intellect links God with an un-divine reality, or a Divine desired reality becomes espoused to an intellect ignorant of God, then in the kingdom of human life duality has occurred and, thus, an associate is created in the servitude directed to God. In this case, the example of man will be like a compass needle, being in a magnetic field, besides the earth’s one: if he did not deviate totally from the polar direction, he would be oscillating. Deviation shall dictate departure from a straight path of God and shall doom him to a destiny that is not his. To quote from the Qur’ān:

“What do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in other part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but degradation in the present life, and on the Day of Resurrection to be returned unto the most terrible chastisement?” (al-Baqarah, 2:85).

g) And finally, *Tawhīd*, from this point of view coordinates the human coherently with the milieu of the universe. The unstinting vastness of the expanse of the universe is a ground wherein innumerable laws of creation are in action and reaction and so constant that any product of the universe, however small or trivial, cannot escape from the dart of the rays of this law. The law of creation is set on a keyboard of traditions, and the strokes thereon is such a harmony as to bring to the audience a tune in full tilt of the gamut of existence, and thereby comes into being the pleasing and portentous display of the universe that embraces man too in its parcel. Man is so packed therein as to obey a general law while enjoying a law particular to himself, and, thus, to remain congruous to the

consequences as a whole. Indeed, the salient characteristic in man (in contradistinction to other creatures who pace towards their natural destiny with no choice) is his being open to options and his power to practice his choice, a criterion for his ascendancy to excellence as well as a ground to go astray. To quote from the Qur'ān:

"So let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve" (al-Kahf, 18:29).

Tawhīd solicits man to pace in a way natural to him and congenial with the universe. Man, as he is the main part of this whole, gets attached by the trudge of his pace and there follows an absolute parity and a total oneness. To quote from the Qur'ān:

"What, do they desire another religion than God's, and to Him has surrendered whoso is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned" (Alī-`Imrān 3:83).

"Hast thou not seen how to God bow all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth; the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the beasts, and many of mankind?" (al-Ḥajj, 22:18).

3. The Outlook from the Social, Economical, and Political Standpoints

a) In the affairs, both those of the universe and those of human beings, competency belongs to none besides God. Planning anything whatsoever, and taking an independent direction are only in the competency of the Creator, Who is All-knowing and All-aware of the needs and the possibilities. The hidden treasures of talents in a human body as well as those innumerable ones in the vastness of the universe together with the relative potentialities in addition to the places of their display, and,

furthermore, the conjugation in between them—all are in His sight and never apart from His wisdom. Therefore, He alone is competent to fashion life and plan a schedule of relations for man, which is again at parity with the line of his pace in the system of the galaxy; accordingly a system to be sketched for a society rests finally on His competency.

This right (as described above) is particularly His and to Him alone, because of the natural and logical consequence of His being God - the Almighty, the Creator, the Master. Therefore, any sort of interference from any in determination of a line to be practiced by a man or a destiny to be headed to, is an encroachment upon the kingdom of Divinity and an inroad into the intrinsic exalted excellence of the Divine. Thus, it is polytheism. To quote from the Qur'ān:

“But no, by thy Lord! They will not believe till they make thee the judge regarding the disagreement between them, then they shall find in themselves no impediment touching thy verdict, but shall surrender in full submission” (an-Nisā', 4:65).

“It is not for any believer, man or woman, when God and His Messenger have decreed a matter, to have the choice in the affair. Whosoever disobeys God and His Messenger has gone astray into manifest error” (al-Aḥzāb 33:36).

b) The right of guardianship and supervision of a society and the leadership of human life is denied to all but to God. Government or a guardianship of a man over a man would necessarily carry tyranny as a concomitant, if it were considered as an independent right stripped of any responsibility. Only if the leadership and supervision over social affairs have been given by a higher power to an individual or vested in a ruling committee entrusted with congenial responsibilities; then alone could the recalcitrance and the obstructions adumbrated by intransigence be leveled and slaked. According to the ideology

of religion, Allah, whose knowledge has no limit, is such a might. To quote from the Qur'ān:

"Not so much as the weight of (even) an atom in heaven and earth escapes from Him"(Sabā', 34:3).

His qualities as Mighty Punisher, Strong Revenger leave no room for any deviation for His chosen and appointed ones. To quote from the Qur'ān:

"Had he invented against Us any sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand, then We would surely have cut his life-vein" (al-Ḥāqqah, 69:44-46).

The government of God is not like one appointed by a nation nor a majority that could be fooled and controlled, nor like a party that could be abused as a means for oppressing and suppressing the voice of the people. It is not like the one appointed by the aristocrats and wealth holders of the society that could be bribed or accepted as shareholders of their enterprises. To ponder deeper: if human life is to terminate at a point along with all its accessory organizations and the thread of things is to be held by a most puissant hand—as it is, of course—then such a hand could never be any but that of the Creator. As such, it is a right especial to God Himself to govern man, <a right> that He exercises through those whom He appoints, namely, those are best in line with the standards established in Divine ideology. So, it is they who carry out the Divine decrees as they guard. To quote from the Qur'ān:

"Say: 'Shall I take a guardian and a ruler other than God, the Originator of the heavens and of the earth, He who feeds and is not fed?' Say: 'I have been commanded to be the first of them that surrender to the command of God.' And you should not be among those of the idolaters" (al-An'ām, 6:14).

“Your guardian (authority) is only God, and His Messenger and those who believed, who perform the prayer and pay alms while they bow down (in their prayer)” (al-Mā'idah, 5:55).

“Say: ‘I take refuge with the Lord of men, the ruler of men, the God of men’” (an-Nās, 114:2-4).

c) Absolute possession and provenance of all the bounties and the stocks existing in the world belong to God. Nothing is an independent belonging of any in this world, although everything in the use of man is a deposit from the Divine so as to be beneficial to the perfection and elevation of man. This is not in the sense that it is at man's own convenience to spoil, if he wished, the bounties of this world, which, as a matter of fact, are the result of the toil of innumerable hands. Man is also not at liberty to enjoy the use of these bounties on errands other than his own elevation.

Whatever is available for man, although for him, is given by God; therefore, it should be utilized for what God (the Donor) has specified and willed. It should be benefited from in the same manner for which it was created. Consuming it in any other way is a deviation from its real use, resulting in evil.

The role of man in this display of the variegated bounties of God, is to utilize them in the right way; of course first and foremost to aim at their own perfection. To quote from the Qur'ān:

“Say: ‘Whose is the earth, and whoso is in it; if you have knowledge?’ They will say: ‘God’s.’ Say: ‘Will you not then remember?’” (al-Mu'minūn, 84, 85).

“It is He Who created for you mankind all that is in the earth” (al-Baqarah, 2:29).

“Serve God! You have no god other than He. It is He Who produced you from the earth and has given you to

live therein" (Hūd, 11:61).

"And those who break the covenant of God after His compact, and who snap what God has commanded to be joined, and who work corruption in the earth, theirs shall be the curse. . ." (ar-Ra'd, 13:25).

d) The right relation with the bounties of the world is on a par among men. The opportunities and the possibilities are equally open to all. Every man is quite free to have his share in conformity with the effort that he exerts. In this untinting expanse there is no precinct prescribed particularly to a person as there are no divisions such as those of creed, geography, history, or even ideology. All are open to toil and take their share. To quote from the Qur'ān:

"It is He Who created for you all [and not for a particular section of you] in the earth" (al-Baqarah, 2:29).

"And the cattle, He created them for you; in them is warmth, and various uses, and of them you eat. And there is beauty in them for you, when you bring them home to rest and when you drive them forth abroad to pasture. And they carry your heavy loads..." (an-Naḥl, 16:5-7).

"It is He Who sends down to you out of heaven water" (an-Naḥl, 16:10).

"Thereby He brings forth for you crops...." (an-Naḥl, 16:11).

"And what He has created in the earth...." (an-Naḥl, 16:13).

"God is He Who made for you the cattle that you may ride on some of them, and of them you may eat" (Ghāfir, 40:79).

In these verses of the beginning of the chapter, an-Nahl, (The Bees), the address is to men and not to any particular group. The same can be seen in other phrases among the same verses:

“If He willed He guides you all . . .” (an-Nahl, 16:9).

“Your God is one God . . .” (an-Nahl, 16:22).

So far our discourse covers only a little of these fruitful dimensions of the rich and deep concept of *Tawhīd*. Yet this little sufficiently argues that *Tawhīd* is not a mere philosophical or noetic impracticable theory that in no way cares about man’s way of life, and nor involves itself in determining man’s destiny or how he acts to reach it. It is not just to *substitute people’s belief. But it is a way for comprehension of the universe. It gives a particular understanding of the universe and of man, of the position of man in knowing the other beings in the world, of man’s position in history, of his capabilities and needs which are always in him and with him, and finally of the direction and the high *perch of his perfection.

On the other hand, it is a social doctrine. It is a design and sketch of the environment suitable to man wherein he can easily progress towards perfection. It is a mold meant for society that fixes a base line and advances a constructive principle. Whenever a society sinks into ignorance and tyranny and loses the character that is the distinction of man, the principle is there to check it. It is a relief to ailing hearts, [a frill to the fallen] and a typhoon in a stagnant, marsh of the society so that it could rebuild itself. It is such a powerful change as to dislodge the foundations and wrench *stones from the stones of social and economic structures of injustice; it rescinds the value while it reveals the true worth. In short, it is a protest in every aspect against the conditions contrived by tyranny. *Tawhīd* is not a new answer nor is it one with an infinitude of practice. But it is a way ever new and always green for a

man. Although it relies on theoretical and mental analysis, its main goal is to provide another method for man's active life.

Therefore, we believe that *Tawhīd* is the radix of religion and a cornerstone whereon rests the pillars of its mansion. It holds a mammoth ideology, the backbone of Islam, for social conduct. It is not just a delicate body to house a thesis of a morality or a judgment of metaphysics.

There have always been those who, in spite of their belief in God and *Tawhīd*, have neglected the obvious, practical and especially the social aspects of this belief, either deliberately or otherwise. These weak believers, regardless of circumstances, have always lived a life like that of non-believers; and their belief has always failed to resuscitate any feeling in them that could keep them from inhaling the putridity of polytheism.

During the dawn of Islam in Mecca, the capital of the renowned idols of the Arabs, there were also supporters of Ibrāhīm's (Abraham's) upright religion. But *Tawhīd* was so confined within their minds that its utmost influence was limited only to their individual conduct. Its presence did not curb nor did its absence give rein to the conjectures of their society, so weightless was their existence, and it continued so without ebb or flow. Furthermore, they, the so-called believers, let themselves drift in the same current of life wherein the non-believers were afloat and were carried away by the lashes of the waves of the prevailing nefarious traditions. As such, in the social sphere, their role was nothing; their existence was of no effect upon society itself; and, under the circumstances, their presence was of no influence at all. So, what else could best mirror the characteristic of *Tawhīd*, the interpretation of which does not surpass the mind?

It was in such conditions that Islam introduced *Tawhīd*, as a thought, of course, and a thought so strong as to promise, and the promise so fertile as to produce a frame that brackets life, and, as for society, gives a new vogue and combs

its disturbed hairs into a curled and crisp order.

So, with such a thought and such a promise, it set foot on the ground of practice. Its very first step revealed an invitation, and the invitation disclosed a revolution which was so *distant and common that it stunned its audience, both those who entertained it, and those who spurned it alike. But all concurred that it was a Message with a new social, economical, and political regulation and with a strange stubbornness to agree with existing conditions. It denies one situation and determines another one!

Believers accepted the Message because of its clarity and openness. For this very reason, its opponents attacked it wildly, anxiously adding pressure day by day. This fact in history is the gauge to determine the veracity of those who claim *Tawhīd*; they are no better than their peers prior to Islam, no matter in *what distance of events or at what spot of the place they be, their belief is no more than a bedlam. It cannot but be a fiction or a fake of the real *Tawhīd* focused on by the apostles, as if it were to see eye to eye with the rivals of God. There never existed *Tawhīd* in such a sense. From this vista, we can see the expansion of Islam in its earlier stages and judge the reactionary backwardness in later stages. The Prophet of Islam brought *Tawhīd* to be the way for the people. Later, it became a matter to be debated. It was a new reckoning for the world. But it was turned into a topic to beguile the time. It was the skeleton of the structure of society, and the axle in the center of all social, economical and political affairs; but later it turned into a means of justifying the existing social structure. It still remains as an axle but only in some artistic and beautiful painting of social relations, and not in actual existence. How can we expect an active and constructive role from a merely ceremonial idea?

From the preceding discourse it comes to light that *Tawhīd*, from a practical point of view, is a mold for society while yet a method for life, and, as a whole, an Islamic system

for the human life striving towards progress, and this forward march is only possible in the richness of its shade. Also, from a theoretical point of view, it is an idea that is considered to be the base and philosophical foundation of that system, and a justification and reasoning for it. With this in the foreground and in the background, we can revert back to the starting point of the essay and analyze the subject from a particular angle at which this article is viewing it.

We said that the prime adversary to the slogan of *Tawhīd* was the wealthy and the powerful class of society. This indicates that the first and foremost blow of *Tawhīd* is directed against the powerful and dominating forces of society, in Qur'ānic terms, the arrogant (*mustakbir*) class. Also we said that the Divine calls of *Tawhīd* made clear their stand in relation to the oppressor and the dominating forces as soon as they became audible in society. Therefore, the Divine calls had to face two confrontations, one opposing the other, from two antipodal wings of society: recalcitrance from the oppressors (*mustakbirīn*) and acceptance from the oppressed (*mustad'afīn*).

At last, we said that such a two-sided reaction is, in fact, characteristic of *Tawhīd*. It is an irrefragable fact that whenever *Tawhīd* had been or is proclaimed in its true sense, the reaction has been or will be the same.

Now, let us see which dimension among its several ones hidden in the concept of *Tawhīd*, is in direct contrast with the interests of the oppressors. In other words, the class of oppressors does see a point in *Tawhīd*; what is the point that so perturbs them, and that, therefore, they fight against with such determination?

To recognize the oppressor in the Qur'ān will be a great help toward comprehending this subject: *mustakbir* in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān describes, on more than forty occasions, the particulars of an oppressor from different angles such as psychology, social position, or his indulgence in power, post, and pelf. Studying the Qur'ānic view of an oppressor, we find

him to have such characteristics as these:

a) Although he (the oppressor) accepts God as a mental or ceremonial reality, or anything with a limited province, he rejects God as is described by the concept of the slogan, "There is no god but Allah." (The concept of his absolute and exclusive authority and ownership.) To quote from the Qur'ān:

"For when it was said to them, 'There is no god but Allah' they were ever waxing proud" (aṣ-Ṣāffāt, 37:35).

b) An oppressor considers himself above others and without having a rightful distinction. He declares such reasons as power and wealth to prove his claim:

"They waxed proud in the earth without right (to justify their position), and they said, 'Who is stronger than we in might?'" (Fuṣṣilat, 41:15).

c) Insisting on his false claim, he rejects God's words, which declare a new order and specify true measures:

"And when Our signs are recited to such a man he turns away, waxing proud, as though he heard them not, and in his ears were heaviness, so give him good tidings of a painful chastisement" (Luqmān, 31:7).

d) He brings forward the excuse, "Had it been correct, we might have conceived it earlier, or God should have addressed us directly." This he does while believing the Call of the Prophet:

"And the non-believers say as regards to the believers, 'If it had been thought good, they had not outstripped us to it'" (al-Aḥqāf, 46:11).

"And when a sign came to them, they said, 'We will not believe until we are given the like of what God's Messengers were given'" (al-An'ām, 6:124).

e) The oppressor introduces the leader of the Call of *Tawhīd* as one who indagates profit and superiority and thus, relying on old and reactionary traditions, tries to discredit him among the people:

“They said (to Moses), ‘Art thou come to us to turn us from that we found our fathers practicing, and that the domination in the land might belong to you two? We do not believe you two’”(Yūnus, 10:78).

f) Using force and tricks, and different methods of imposing and fooling, an oppressor, pushes people in his path, which destines them to slavery and unconditional servitude to him. Therefore, he forces them to resist and oppose any emancipating call.

“They [their followers on the Day of Resurrection], shall say, ‘Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and great ones, and they led us astray from the way.’”
(al-Aḥzāb, 33:67)

“And the weak ones argue with the oppressors [on the Day of Resurrection, ‘Why, we were your followers; will you avail us now against any part of the Fire?’” (Ghāfir, 40:47).

“Said the council of the aides of Pharaoh, ‘Surely this man (Moses) is a cunning sorcerer who desires to expel you from your land; what do you command?’” (al-A`rāf, 7:109,110).

g) Finally, the oppressor comes into the open and confronts the Prophet and his followers, who have risen up against the dominating order and are dedicated to a change, in a deliberate, atrocious animosity and thought:

“Slain were the Men of the Pit, the fire abounding in fuel, when they were seated over it, and themselves were

witnesses of what (tortures) they did with the believers” (al-Burūj, 85:4 -7).

“And Pharaoh said (to his advisors), ‘Let me slay Moses, and let him call to his Lord (as he can). I fear that he may change your religion [which dominates the mind of the people], or that he may cause corruption (rebellion) to appear in the land’” (Ghāfir, 40:26).

This was a small part of particularities and characteristics of the arrogant (oppressor) in some verses of the Qur’ān. The Qur’ān goes still beyond and classifies the arrogant (oppressors) in categories symbolizing each:

“Then We sent forth, after them, Moses and Aaron (Hārūn) to Pharaoh and his council with Our signs, but they waxed proud” (Yūnus, 10:75).

“And Korah (Qārūn), and Pharaoh, and Haman (Hāmān), and Moses came to them with the clear signs, but they waxed proud in the earth” (al-ʿAnkabūt, 29:39).

Pharaoh, all know him. Haman was his special advisor and a prime personality in the politics of Egypt after Pharaoh. The council of Pharaoh’s aides was the chiefs in Pharaoh’s regime who guide the affairs.

Korah was a rich hoarder of wealth and the keys to his <treasuries> were so bulky that it was a matter of bodily strength to hold or carry them. In the light of these and several other such verses of the Qur’ān, the oppressor is he who dominates society, wields political and economical power without reservation, to prolong his tyrannical power and the advantages therefrom. He even captivates minds by imposing his ideology so as to keep them riveted to a process that corrupts even while it provides the possibility of persistence in oppression. Therefore, there is every reason for an oppressor to fight against every call that enlightens the minds of people and instigates any revolutionary and changing call, or else he

has to give up what he has gained and lose what he loves.

Let us return to our original theme: How were the prophets used to introduce *Tawhīd*? Considering the method they used to bring forth this slogan, while revealing the most constitutional basics of their ideology, easily reveals what in *Tawhīd* is unbearable to the oppressor, and, secondly the reason why this wing cannot bear *Tawhīd* when it is so introduced?

We know that the slogan of *Tawhīd*, had been the first rays of the call of all prophets. The sentence, "Say, there is no god but Allah, to prosper" is a well-known declaration of the Prophet of Islam. Also the sentence, "Oh people, worship Allah, there is no god to you beside Him," is repeated on several occasions in the Qur'ān as the title of the call of such great prophets as Nūḥ (Noah), Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Shu'ayb, etc.

And we see, these slogans are focused on the "denial of servitude but to God," and have introduced *Tawhīd* from this point of view more than any. The prophets have admonished the people who were in the slumber of ignorance and sunk in a tyrannical society to not worship any pole of power except God. The call started, indeed, as a challenge to those who used to claim being deities and masters of the people.

Who makes such a claim in a society? What does it mean to fight them? And what scene does this suggest to be the characteristic of a society promised by the prophets? To hold a belief of being a deity is repudiated. The tyrants who wield power, political and social, used to convey to the people that since they were deities they hold in themselves a part of the spirit of God. On the other hand, the vastness of the concepts of 'worship', 'lordship', and 'divinity' in the Qur'ān leads us to a conclusion that the claimers of being deities have an even wider scope in their pose and purpose. The term 'worship' (*ibādah*) in the Qur'ān means to surrender or yield or obey to a man or any other being unconditionally. When we have resigned ourselves without any 'why', it is tantamount to saying that we have worshipped him.

Accordingly, when an element of a power, whether inside us or outside, has made us obedient and dependent and a tool to be used, we have become its 'worshippers and servants', as is evident from these Qur'ānic verses, in the beginning of the call when Moses rebuked and censured Pharaoh:

"That is (a *Messing thou reproachest me with), having enslaved the Children of Israel" (ash-Shu'arā', 26:22).

The conversation between Pharaoh and the chiefs of his regime:

"Should we believe two humans like us while their people are worshippers to us" (al-Mu'minūn, 23:47).

The Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) addresses his father thus:

"Father, serve not Satan; surely Satan is a rebel against the All-merciful" (Maryam, 19:44).

In a general address of God directed to all human beings:

"Made I not a covenant with you, children of Adam, that you should not serve Satan; surely he is a manifest foe to you" (Yāsīn, 36:60).

Promise of God to all human beings who have a reckoning:

"Those who eschew the serving of idols (*tāghūt*) and turn penitent to God, for them is good tidings! So give thou good tidings to My servants" (az-Zumar, 39:17).

To those who criticize the faithful and the belief in God and in His revelations, God says:

"Whomsoever God has cursed, and with whom He is in wrath, and made some of them apes and swine, and he

who worshipped (*fāghūt*), they are worse situated, and have gone further astray from the right way" (*al-Mā'ida*, 5:60).

From these foregoing verses it comes to light that the obedience to Pharaoh and the members of his regime, and to a tyrant or to a satan is interpreted as 'worship'. As such, in the sense of the Qur'ānic term it means to follow, to resign, and to obey a power (other than God) in absoluteness, whether it be by desire or under pressure, and be it with or without praise and sanctity. Anyway, one side turns into a worshipper, while the other the worshipped. This concludes that the term 'divinity' or 'divine' (*Allāh*), which is another interpretation of 'being worshipped' and 'the worshipped one', correctly translates to this:

In an erroneously organized society, wherein the people are divided into two classes, one that of the oppressor and the other that of the oppressed, in other words, a dominator and a beneficiary class while the other a deprived one, this in itself is a paragon of a worshipper and the worshipped. Such an inconsistency between the two wings of a society is an indicator that points to the deities whom worship is directed to. To know the worshipped ones and divines in historical societies, one should not look for a sacred being either of a man, animal or a thing. The cardinal ones in these societies are those who, with their dependence upon the oppressors, have yoked the multitudes of the oppressed ones.

In such societies, polytheism is the religion. Because there are idols, worshipped ones, and divinities as many as there are poles of power that rule the people, and push them in their own desired path as if they (the people) have neither eyes nor ears and know not where they stand and what they do. Polytheism means accepting the divinity of others and obeying and worshipping them instead of God or leveling them with

God. It means giving the control of life to others than God. It means surrendering to every pole of power other than God, seeking one's needs from them, and paving the path that they define.

Tawhīd is an antipode to such polytheism. It denies all the deities and obedience to them. It calls for a campaign against their domination. It asks for discarding their help. And finally *Tawhīd* is to be dedicated in reminding them as it calls upon hearts to pursue their provider, God. The prime slogan of all the messengers of God was that 'no' to others, and this 'yes' to God. To quote from the Qur'ān:

"Indeed, We sent forth among every nation a messenger, say: 'Serve your God, and eschew *īdghūts* [idols, anti-God forces]" (an-Naḥl, 16:36).

"And We sent never a messenger before thee except that We revealed to him, saying, 'There is no god but I; so serve Me'" (al-Anbiyā', 21:25).

Therefore, the messengers of God, by this slogan, have denied the corrupted and perverted system of society, and invited people to get into a vast struggle against *īdghūts* (oppressors) namely the guardians of the system, who had rebelled against the noble human values, those who had imposed some false values upon the people in order to keep their oppressing position. Denial of polytheism, in fact is the denial of all social, economical, and political foundations whereon the construction of that society rests and wherein the polytheism is housed as a rightful tenant and wherefrom it keeps vigilance on the unstable situation. When the deities as such are denied and rejected, so also all those who are dedicated to oppressing the people and keeping them down by imposing on and fooling them, taking full advantage of all their capabilities to satiate their unlimited desires, are denied too. Moses, by declaring the same slogan, and in direct talk

with the Lord of the worlds had openly fought Pharaoh, and denied him. It is true that the aides of Pharaoh brought up many charges against Moses, such as his denial of idols. But they and Pharaoh himself were aware that those lifeless idols were just a cover and a justification for their own divinity.

"Then said the council of the regime of Pharaoh [to Pharaoh], 'Wilt thou leave Moses and his people to work corruption in the land, and leave thee and thy gods?'" (al-A`rāf, 7:127).

The lifeless idols are just an excuse for imposing the divinity of live-idols. Therefore, it was quite logical that, in response to Moses' invitation towards God, the Creator of heavens and earth, the Lord of all, the Possessor of the east and the west, they treat him and his supporters to torture and death. To quote from the Qur'ān:

"Said he (Pharaoh), 'If thou takest a god other than me, I shall surely make thee one of the imprisoned, (ash-Shu`arā', 26:29).

"Said he, 'We shall slaughter their sons and spare their women; surely we are triumphant over them'" (al-A`raf, 7:1 27).

Pharaoh said to his magicians who had believed in Moses against his wishes:

"I shall assuredly cut off alternately your hands and feet, then I shall crucify you all together" (al-A`rāf, 7:123).

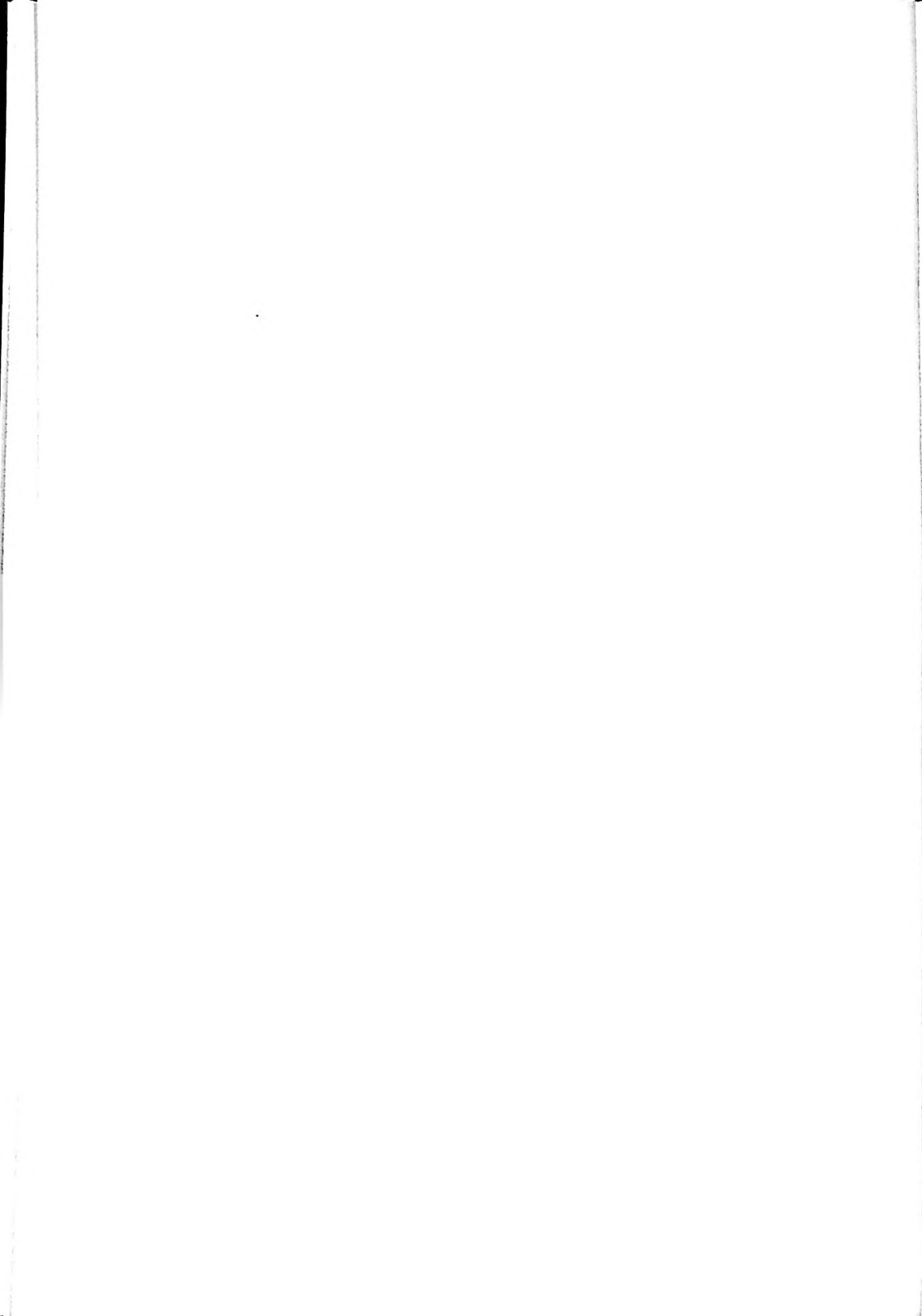
Such atrocities against the name of Allah, and the Messenger of *Tawhīd* stand only because this emancipating message, means:

Acceptance of God to dominate life.
Denial of all others who claim such with strife.

Proud declaration of servitude to Him alone.

Dependency to be cut upon all but upon Him sown.

This is the essence of *Tawhīd*, and its most flashing
dimension.



Iqbal, The Poet-Philosopher of Islamic Resurgence

(This is a translation of President Sayyid Ali Khamene'i's speech delivered at the opening session of the First International Conference on Iqbal, held at Tehran, March 10-12, 1986, on the occasion of the 108th birth anniversary of the poet of the Subcontinent.)

I should admit candidly that today when I see that our country is holding a seminar for paying tribute to our beloved Iqbal, I am obliged to feel that this day would prove to be one of the most memorable and exciting days of my life. That luminous spark that washed out from our hearts the darkness of the days of suffocation and repression (through his impressions, poetry, counsel and teachings) and projected a bright picture of the future before our eyes is now transformed into a bright torch to have attracted the attention of our people.

Our people, who were the first foreign addressees of Iqbal, were unfortunately very late to recognize him. The particular conditions in our country, especially the political domination of the colonialist powers in Iran, his favorite country, during the last years of Iqbal's life never allowed him to visit this country. This great poet of the Persian language, who composed most of his poetry in Persian and not in his own mother tongue, could never breathe in his dear and desired climes. Not only did Iqbal never come to Iran, but the same politics with which Iqbal was at war throughout his life did not allow his ideas, his ideology and his teachings to reach the ears of the Iranian people, who were ever eager to receive his message. I have an answer to this question as to why Iqbal did not come to Iran.

At that time, when Iqbal was at the pinnacle of his fame and glory and was known all over the Subcontinent and when all the renowned universities of the World recognized him as a great thinker, philosopher, scholar, humanist and sociologist (of course none of these titles corresponded to the title by which Iqbal desired to be known), in our country the politicians who ruled the country could not tolerate Iqbal and his ideas in any way. For this very

reason he was never invited to Iran, and the ground for his visit to this country was not prepared. Not only were none of his books published for years in Iran, even the titles of his books remained unknown to us. During the days when literary works and culture alien to both the Iranians and Muslims were flooding this country like a devastating deluge, not a single poem or work of Iqbal was allowed to catch the public eye. Today, the Islamic Republic (i.e. the embodiment of Iqbal's dream) has been established here. Iqbal's heart ached to see the Muslim people having lost their human and Islamic personality, and he viewed their loss of identity and their spiritual poverty as the greatest danger to their existence. Iqbal tried with all the power at his disposal to uproot this vicious weed from the human soul in general and from the inner being of the people of the East in particular, especially the Muslims. Were he alive today, he could see a nation standing on its feet, infused with the rich Islamic spirit and drawing upon the inexhaustible reservoirs of Islamic heritage, a nation which has become self-sufficient and has discarded all the glittering Western ornaments and is marching ahead courageously, determining its own targets and moving to attain them, advancing with the frenzy of a lover, and which has not imprisoned itself within the walls of nationalism and racialism. I am glad to have this opportunity (though for a brief time) to introduce to our people this great figure, a great thinker, a great reformer of our age, a revolutionary and an unrelenting warrior. I would, of course, be pleased if my presence in this function be free from all formalities, so that, firstly, I may enjoy with satisfaction this commemorative ceremony and, secondly, I may be given an opportunity to give vent to a fraction of my emotions about Iqbal before the audience. I request the brothers and sisters to allow me to speak frankly like a person who for years has been a follower of Iqbal and has lived emotionally in his company, so that to some extent I can give him what is due to him on behalf of myself. Iqbal is one of the eminent personalities in the history of Islam. His is such a profound and sublime personality that it cannot be described and measured by only one dimension of his life. Iqbal was a scholar and a philosopher, but at the same time other dimensions of his life are also so bright that if we consider him to be just a philosopher and a scholar, we feel that we have belittled him. Undoubtedly Iqbal is a great poet and is

reckoned among the greatest. Those who know Urdu very well and have written about Iqbal's Urdu poetry maintain that Iqbal's Urdu poems are among the best in Urdu. Of course this may not be a great tribute to him as the poetic tradition of Urdu is not so rich. But it cannot be disputed that his Urdu poetry made a great impact on large numbers of people, on Hindus and Muslims equally, living in the Subcontinent during the early decades of the twentieth century, and motivated them to participate in the struggle (for freedom) that was reaching its climax. In his mathnawi (a long poem consisting of rhymed couplets) *Asrār-e khudī* (The Secrets of the Self), he refers to this point:

*"The gardener tested the force of my speech.
He sowed a verse of mine and could reap a sword from it."*

I infer from these lines that he had been composing his Urdu poetry for quite a long time and was known to all Urdu-knowing people of the Subcontinent. But in my view Iqbal's Persian poetry is to be regarded as one of the miracles of poetry. We have a large number of non-Persian-speaking poets in the history of our literature, but I cannot point out any of them whose poetry possesses the qualities of Iqbal's Persian poetry. Iqbal was not acquainted with Persian idiom, as he spoke Urdu at home and talked to his friends in Urdu or English. He did not know the rules of Persian prose writing. A specimen of Iqbal's Persian prose is available to us in his prefatory note to his mathnawi, *Rumūz-e bīkhudī* (The Secrets of the Selflessness) and *Asrār-e khudī* (The Secrets of the Self). If you read them, you will see that it is hard for the people whose mother tongue is Persian to understand it. Iqbal never studied Persian at any stage in a school or college during the years of his childhood or youth. In his father's house he used to speak Urdu. Iqbal chose the Persian language as his medium of literary expression only for the reason that he felt that his ideas and themes could not be effectively expressed in the Urdu language. As such he was attracted towards Persian and he studied the collections of the Persian poets like Sa'di, Hāfiz and Mawlavi as well as the Persian poets who wrote in Indian style like 'Urfī, Nazirī Nishābūrī and others. In spite of not having tasted the Persian way of life, never living in the cradle

of Persian culture, and never having any direct association with it, he cast with great mastery the most delicate, the most subtle and radically new philosophical themes into the mould of Persian poetry, some of which are unsurpassable yet. In my view this is what can be explained as his poetic genius. When you compare his poetical works with those of other non-Iranian poets who wrote poetry in Persian, you will realize the greatness of Iqbal. Some of the ideas that he has expressed with ease in one couplet, if one tries to render them into prose it will take a long time and great deal of effort to do so. It is not an easy job even for us whose mother tongue is Persian.

There can be no better introduction of Iqbal than his poetry. In no other way we can introduce Iqbal more truly. Some of the Persian poems of Iqbal are the most sublime pieces of Persian poetry. Iqbal's verses are in different styles, in Indian style, in Iraqi style, in Khurasani-style, and in various poetic forms, like *mathnawi* (poetry composed of distichs corresponding in measure, each consisting of a pair of rhymes), *ghazal* (sonnet), *qat'ah*, *dobayti* (couplets) and *rubai* (quatrains). Their themes as well as their renderings are sublime; notwithstanding, he did not know how to speak and write Persian (prose), and this needs extraordinary genius. At the same time to commend Iqbal as a poet is to belittle him, for he was a great reformer and a great freedom fighter as well. Though Iqbal's position and status as a freedom fighter and social reformer is very high, he cannot be regarded as a mere social reformer either. In the Indian subcontinent several Hindu and Muslim contemporaries of Iqbal were considered as social reformers, whose works are known and whose participation in the freedom struggle needs no introduction. Among the Muslims themselves there were great personalities like Mawlana Abu al-Kalam Azad, Mawlana Muhammad 'Alī, Mawlana Shawkat 'Alī and the late Muhammad 'Alī Jinnah. They also belonged to the same period and to the same generation and were great freedom fighters; but the greatness of Iqbal's work cannot be compared with any of them. It does not mean in any way to minimize the great importance and value that we attach to Mawlana Abū al-Kalam Azad, an eminent figure in his own right, or to Mawlana Muhammad 'Alī and Mawlana Shawkat 'Alī (who were untiring Muslim freedom fighters who struggled for long years to drive out the British from their country), but Iqbal's case is

different from all of them. Iqbal's problem was not the problem of India in particular, but his concern was for the whole Muslim world in general. In his mathnawī, *Pas chi bayad kard ay aqwām-e Sharq*, he addresses himself to the Eastern nations and it indicates that his keen eyes had an all-inclusive view of the entire Muslim world. He was not concerned with the problems of India alone. Therefore, if I describe Iqbal as a social reformer, I will fail to cover his entire personality. I cannot find a proper term that can describe him. You can see that his personality, his greatness, his mind rich with ideas and the totality of his being, elude the power of comprehension of people like us. To be true to ourselves we have to confess that we have been far away from Iqbal. As such this conference is one of the most useful things we have done so far. Even this is not enough. I would ask the honored Minister of Higher Education and Culture and my brothers in universities to think about the possibilities of establishing foundations in Iqbal's memory, and to name, university halls and cultural centers in our country after Iqbal. Iqbal belongs to this nation and this country, and one of his famous poems dedicated to the people of Iran begins with the following verse:

*I am burning like a tulip's lamp on your path,
O youth of Iran, I swear by my own life and yours.
And he says:
The man is coming who shall break the chains of the slaves,
I have seen him through the cracks in the walls of your prison.*

This poem also strengthens my belief as to why Iqbal could not visit Iran. He considered Iran as a prison and addressed the people living here in the way that prisoners are addressed. There are plenty of poems in Iqbal's collections which show his dissatisfaction with India at least the India of his own time. It was for this reason that he turned his attention to Iran so that the flame that was burning inside his heart could be converted into a bright blaze in Iran. He was waiting for a miracle to occur here. This is Iqbal's due that we owe to him, and we should always remember our indebtedness to him.

If we wish to understand Iqbal and the significance of his message, it is necessary for us to know the conditions of the Subcontinent during Iqbal's lifetime - an epoch that culminated in

Iqbal. Without this study we cannot understand the real meaning of Iqbal's message, the melody of his tone and the inner fire that kept him restless. The Subcontinent went through the hardest phase of its history during Iqbal's lifetime. Iqbal was born in 1877, that is, twenty years after the quelling of the Muslim's revolt against the English in 1857, when they inflicted a final blow upon the Islamic rule in the Subcontinent. A great revolutionary upsurge overtook the whole country and continued for several years, but four months (the middle of 1857) marked its culmination. The British used this opportunity for making an assault on Islam, which they were contemplating to make for the last seventy or eighty years, and they imagined to have uprooted Islam from the Indian soil.

They put an end to the Muslim rule that was breathing its last breaths. The only obstacle in their way of the total colonisation of the Indian subcontinent was the existence of the same rule, which they had succeeded in weakening during the course of time. They liquidated its chief fighters and eminent personages in order to eradicate the deep-rooted Islamic civilization and to completely uproot this corpulent and old tree which was shorn of any power of resistance at that time, and to make India a part of the British empire. The year 1857 was the year of absolute victory for the British in India. After having officially annexed India to Britain and named their country as the Empire of Britain and India, the colonizing of India did not pose any problem, for India was treated henceforward as one of the provinces of the Great Britain. After that they took all possible precautions to crush every revivalist, nationalist or religious movement in that country. Their aim was to wipe out completely the Muslim population, as they knew it well that it were the Muslims who resisted them in India. They already had tested this. The Muslims fought with the English and their mercenaries, the Sikhs, who were serving them since the early nineteenth century. This was known to the English very well and to those who were acquainted with the Indian affairs, who used to tell them that the Muslims were their real enemies in India and that they were to be eliminated. From the year 1857, which was the year of their victory, an extremely oppressive and tyrannical plan was chalked out to suppress the Muslims. If we go into its detail it will take a long time. Many books were written on this subject. The Muslims were subjected to economic pressures

as well as to cultural and social discriminations. Collectively they were subjected to the worst kind of humiliations. As regard to the conditions of employment their declared policy was to recruit non-Muslims only.

The *awqāf* (endowments) that ran Islamic institutions and mosques were in large number and they were taken away. The Hindu merchants were motivated to lend money to the Muslims in order to seize their property in return for their debts. It was resolved that their relationship with the land be cut off and their sense of belonging to the land be uprooted. This process continued for a long time. The Muslims were killed without reason and arrested for no fault of theirs. All such people who were suspected of carrying on any activities against the English were suppressed and eliminated ruthlessly. These conditions prevailed for several years. After one or two decades of this repression, which has no parallel anywhere in the world - not in any of the colonized countries were the people suppressed so severely as the Indian Muslims - ultimately some people began to think about the possible remedy for this situation, but, of course, the angry resistance against the English was not given up. India should never be forgetful of the fact that the Indian Muslims played the most vital part in the battle against the English. In fact it will be an act of thanklessness on the part of India to forget her indebtedness to the Muslims of India. The Muslims did not sit idle during the freedom struggle as well as during the great revolution that was brought about there.

During the years after the incident of 1857, when there was peace and calm everywhere, the militant Muslim elements were active in every nook and cranny. There were two courses of action open to them, that is, either the politico-cultural movement, or a purely cultural movement to meet the challenge threatening the position of the Muslims. One of the movements was led by the '*ulamā*' and the other was initiated under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. These two movements represented two cross-currents opposing each other, and this is not the occasion to go into detail concerning them.

The '*ulamā*' believed in waging war against the English. They resolved to boycott the English and their educational institutions and not to accept any grant from them. The course followed by

Sayyid Ahmad Khan was in the opposite direction. He believed in having good relations with the Englishmen, benefiting from their institutions and making a compromise with them. Unfortunately both of the two movements, though opposed to each other, ended in disastrous consequences for the Muslims. The first one that was led by the eminent Indian '*ulamā*', many among whom were distinguished historical figures. Their struggle was rightly guided and their ideology was also based on right thinking, but they tried to keep away the Indian Muslim community from acquiring the first and foremost thing they required and which could enable them to master modern developments in science and technology; for example, they did not include teaching of the English language in their school syllabi. Perhaps they were justified in doing so at that time, as the English language was to replace the Persian language, which had been the favorite language of the Muslims for centuries as well as the official language of the Subcontinent. They viewed English as an intruder. Anyhow, their opposition to the English language and their lack of interest in modern civilization, which at any rate had to govern the modes of the life of the people, kept the Muslim Ummah out of modern sciences along with their benefits and advantages, which were ultimately essential for the development of society.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's movement was more dangerous, and here I would like to express my considered opinion about him. (It is possible that some of the brothers may not agree with me.) Sayyid Ahmad Khan did not do anything positive for Islam and Indian Muslims. In my view, the movement initiated by Iqbal was a protest against the movement whose standard-bearer was Sayyid Ahmad Khan in India. Sayyid Ahmad Khan based his movement on friendly relations with the Englishmen under the pretext that after all the young generation of the Muslims had to be acquainted with the modern culture and that they could not afford to keep them alienated from and ignorant of the new currents. In his view it was essential to reconcile with the Englishmen so that the Muslims might not be mistreated by them and the Muslim men, women and children might not suffer due to this antagonism. He was very naive to believe that he could win the sympathy of the English and could soften the hearts of those seasoned and villainous politicians by

being friendly and humble towards them.

As a consequence, the English spared Sayyid Ahmad Khan himself, his associates and the intellectuals around him whereas the Muslims in general remained exposed to all sorts of victimization till India won independence. Therefore, this policy of pleasing the Englishmen on the part of Sayyid Ahmad Khan proved to be harmful for the Muslims and brought disgrace and humiliation to them.

More than anything what helps us to understand the significance and worth of Iqbal is the knowledge of the general conditions of the Muslims in those days. For the Muslim masses, intellectuals, scholars and all those who entered the broader fields of social life could acquire knowledge, master modern science and gain degrees and positions, but were completely oblivious of their Islamic identity. Gradually the future hopes were lost for the colossal Muslim society of India that had the largest Muslim population in the world. (Even today we do not have a country that has such a big population of the Muslims as was at that time in Indian subcontinent.) A bleak future stared them in the face; they did not possess any awareness of their Islamic identity, and had lost all hope. They suffered to such an extent that in the existing world and all its occurrences they saw nothing but bitterness, frustration and darkness in store for themselves.

A sense of inferiority had gripped the being of the Indian Muslims, and a deep sense of humiliation and weakness had become a part and parcel of their personality. They could not think of any way out of this predicament. At that time, when Iqbal returned from Europe, well-versed in modern Western culture, and while his contemporary intellectuals, his friends and even those who shared the same ideas with him always looked towards, the West and Western culture, they were of the view that Westernization of their individual lives and the assimilation of Western culture and the Western value system would add to their prestige and credibility. To be in the service of the British government which ruled India with an iron hand was considered to be an honor for the Muslims. The Hindus, who were several years ahead of the Muslims regarding the adoption of Western culture and manners, and who were quicker than they in winning the confidence of the Englishmen had gained

an advantageous position.

The Muslims must have been insulted and exploited by the Hindus also. Even the Sikhs, who were a very slim minority and had no religious or cultural traditions, considered it justified to oppress and insult the Muslims. Such was the state of the Muslim society during Iqbal's time. The Lahore college where Iqbal received his education and obtained his bachelor's degree was bereft of all the signs of Islamic thinking which could inspire any future hope. The most respected book on Islam in those days was Sir Thomas Arnold's work entitled in Arabic *al-Da'wah ilâ al-Islâm* (An Invitation to Islam), which has been lately translated into Persian also. The book was written by Sir Thomas Arnold during his tenure at the Lahore college. It is of course a good book and I do not want to condemn it, but the thing which is remarkable about this book is that he has made every effort to lessen the importance of Islamic jihad. The main theme around which the book revolves is that Islam advanced through *da'wah* (invitation) and not by means of the sword. These words sound good, but this English thinker has gone to the extent of considering the concept of Islamic jihad as a secondary issue. Sir Thomas is the person who is regarded as a sincere pro-Islamic writer and he was Iqbal's teacher also.

Here I would like to praise Iqbal's judiciousness in this regard. Despite his intimate relations with Sir Arnold, he was not unmindful of the political motives of his academic work. This point has been also emphasized by Mr. Jawid Iqbal in his biography of his father (one volume of which has been translated into Persian). He writes that Iqbal challenged his friend Sayyid Nadhir Niyazi, who believed Sir Thomas Arnold to be an Islamist. Questioning Arnold's credentials, he asked, 'Do you judge him by *al-Da'wah ila al-Islâm?*', and answered himself, 'He works for the British government.' Iqbal further told the same friend that when he was in England Arnold asked him to translate Edward Browne's 'Literary of History of Persia', but he declined to do it as he realized that it was written with political motives. Now you can see yourself how Iqbal evaluated Browne's book and compare it with the attitude of our writers who were Browne's friends and were proud of their relations with him. You can see how simple, naive and ignorant these people were, having

no inkling of their political objectives, whereas Iqbal was perceptive and intelligent enough to understand the hidden implications of the colonialist politics in the works of Thomas Arnold and Edward Browne. This is an indication of Iqbal's greatness.

At that time the Muslims were in a very precarious condition. The British administration and its main institutions were under the direct control of the British, and the secondary and less important positions were held by the Hindus. The freedom movement that was first launched by the Muslims was grabbed by the Congress party, and that too a prejudiced Congress party. Later on the Indian National Congress rendered great service to the freedom struggle, but during those days it was dominated by communal prejudices. It was predominantly an anti-Islamic, pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim communalist organization. There were Westernized Muslim intellectuals who were infatuated with the Western values on the one hand, and on the other there were the poor Muslim masses, crushed under the burden of extreme poverty and drudgery.

The Muslim '*ulamā*' and religious leaders were isolated from the freedom movement (after their initial defeat) and were alienated from it (except those who were in the vanguard of the movement, leaders like Mawlana Muhammad 'Alī). Political isolation and economic deprivation ruled supreme. The Muslims were reduced to the state of being a superfluous part of the Indian society, without any guiding star on the horizon. In such crucial moments Iqbal kindled the torch of egohood. Of course, India was no exception; the above-mentioned conditions prevailed throughout the Muslim world. It was for the very same reason that Iqbal speaks about the whole Islamic world. Iqbal's day-to-day life in the city of Lahore in the colonized subcontinent of India led him to directly experience the pains and hardships of life. It was at this juncture that Iqbal raised the banner of his revolt. His was a cultural, political and revolutionary movement. The first thing that was necessary for Iqbal to do was to make the Indian society aware of its Islamic identity, Islamic ego and the Islamic personality, or rather the human dimension of its personality. He asks the people as to why they were complacent, why they were forgetful and why they had abandoned their real selves. He asks them to regain their Islamic and human identity. This was the first message delivered by Iqbal. But, could he succeed in

awakening the nation of several hundreds of millions that had been subjected to severe exploitation and humiliation for a long time. A nation that was divested of the capacity to understand, to know and to hope against hope was now asked to assert existence and recover its identity as soon as possible. It was almost an impossible task, very difficult to be realized. In my humble opinion no one could convey this message in a better way than Iqbal did. With a view to attain this end Iqbal evolved his philosophy of the self (*khudi*). The philosophy of egohood in the sense of subjective philosophical views is not the subject of our discussion. The conception of ego, which has human and social implications, was presented philosophically so that it could fit in a philosophical tradition. As Iqbal wished to make it the central theme of his poems, ghazals, and mathnawis, this notion required to be based on a sound philosophical outlook. Iqbal conceived ego as the source of feeling and knowing one's individuality through contemplation, introspection, self-cognition and self-realization. He explained this conception in philosophical terms.

In my view, in the beginning the idea of ego might have occurred to Iqbal as a revolutionary idea, and afterwards he made an attempt to philosophize it. It may be argued that ego is the same thing that was the most needed in the Indian society, and in general was missing in the entire Muslim world as well. In spite of having an Islamic value-system the Muslim peoples had become unmindful of it, and eagerly surrendered themselves to an alien system with full faith. It was, therefore, necessary for them to return to their own selves, that is, to the Islamic value-system. In this very sense Iqbal was trying to pursue as a goal. Such a sociological concept could not be impressed on the minds of people without being expressed in a philosophical manner. Iqbal had to present it philosophically.

As said above, the idea of selfhood or ego at first was conceived by Iqbal as a sociological and revolutionary notion. In due course, after having witnessed the signs of degeneration and loss of self-identity of the Eastern nations, especially the Muslims, and after examining its causes, this idea became permanent and deeply rooted in his being. Afterwards he sought to provide a philosophical and subjective ground to it, and based this notion on a general conception of the self, something similar to the conception of existence as evolved by our philosophers - an essence which is

shared by all beings but needs to be interpreted philosophically. Of course, *wujūd* (existence) is something different from *khud* (ego), and to interpret it as existence, as is done by some of the persons who have written commentaries on Iqbal's poems, is a great blunder in my view. The notion of unity in plurality and plurality in unity, which has been recurrently used in his *Asrār-e khudī* (The Secrets of the Self), is different from the metaphysical conception of unity in plurality and plurality in unity as interpreted by Mullā Ṣadrā and others. It is altogether a different category. What Iqbal meant to refer to by this notion had a one hundred per cent human and social connotation. When I say it is social, I do not mean that it is not applicable to the individual. Why not? Ego needs to be strengthened in an individual. But this very egohood of the ego of an individual and the strengthening of the personality of the ego have social implications in the Islamic framework. Unless the personality of the (individual) ego is strengthened, a strong and stable society in its real sense cannot come into existence. The meaning of the ego is different from that of the existence. At the first instance he speaks in the manner of mystics about the generality and the extent of the concept of self. The world of being is actualized through the manifestations of the ego. Each one of the phenomena of the universe is a manifestation of a particular aspect of the self. Of course, some of the themes that I have described in my own words have been differently presented by Iqbal in the headings of his poems. There are some other themes that are expressed far more beautifully in his poetry than their paraphrasing by Iqbal himself in the headings of certain poems.

The ideas, themselves produced by the self-consciousness, are the manifestations of the ego in every being. The affirmation of one's ego is also an affirmation of others. When the presence of the ego in a human being is posited, it automatically posits the presence of egos other than one's own. Therefore there is self as well as the non-self, that is, the existence of other is also posited. Hence it may be inferred that the whole universe is contained as a possibility in the self. The ego is the source of hostility also. There are various selves that are at war with one another. This struggle, this perpetual conflict brings the world into existence. It is the ego which is responsible for the selection of the fittest and its survival as

well. So often, thousands of selves are sacrificed for the sake of one higher self. The concept of ego is a graded one and its grades vary in intensity and weakness. The degree of intensity and weakness of the ego in each one of the beings is the factor which determines their strength and firmness. In this context he cites the examples of various entities such as the drop, the wine, the goblet, the cup-bearer, the mountain, the desert, the wave, the sea, the light, the eye, the verdure, the candle, the silence, the candle-bearer, the gem, the earth, the moon, the star, the sun, the tree, etc. Each one of them is measured by the intensity of its ego; for instance, a drop has a particular strength of ego, while a stream has a different strength of ego. Similarly a gem on which an image can be engraved possesses an ego-strength different from that of a stone on which no image can be engraved. Finite ego is never absolute. It always refers to a graded essence, which is present in things and human individuals, as well as in cosmic elements in diverse measures. He concludes this theme with the following verse:

*When ego embraces Élan Vital,
The stream of life is transformed into an ocean.*

Afterwards he expounds his views about the pursuit of ideals and aspirations, something that was most wanting in the Islamic world in those days. It means that the Muslims did not have any purpose in life. They did not have any high aspirations either. Their ambitions were confined to day-to-day life. He holds the view that the human life is nothing without purpose and aim. The ego attains selfhood through moving towards the desired ideals: 'Verily the life is faith and jihad' (striving). He has expressed the same idea in a very comprehensive, profound, subtle and elegant way in his poetry. To desire for something and to strive unceasingly for attaining it is called purposiveness, without which life becomes synonymous with death.

It is desire that makes the universe throb with life. Nature is the shell and desire is the pearl. The heart that is incapable of cherishing desires is a bird with broken wings, unable to fly. It is aspiration that strengthens the life of the self, and transforms it into a restless, ever-surging sea. It is the joy of viewing that gives vision to the viewing eye. It is the fun of walking that gives feet to the

pheasant. It is the effort to sing that is instrumental in endowing the nightingale's beak with melody. It is the piper's hands and the lips that breathe musical notes into reed, which was nothing but a mere straw in the reed-bed.

Science, culture, poetry, literature, law, everything is the product of human aspirations actualized through continuous struggle. Hence he says:

*Our lives are sustained by the ideals we create for ourselves,
Our being is illuminated by the rays of our aspirations.
He reiterates the same theme in another verse:*

*Man is hot-blooded due to his burning passions,
This clay glows with the light of aspirations.*

He considers love and passion essential for human society and individual man, for it strengthens the individual as well as the social ego. He holds that the ego of an individual and the society cannot be strengthened without love. It is essential that the Islamic *millah* and all other human beings who desire to strengthen their selves should kindle the fire of love in their breasts. It is remarkable that he himself determines an object of love, a point around which the Muslim Ummah has to rally. It is at this juncture that one feels how intelligently this man of awareness and insight comprehended the necessity of the unity of the Muslim world. His quest for the rallying point led him to believe that the love of the Prophet Muhammad al-Mustafa (S) was the only passion that could motivate and rally the Muslim Ummah around a new consciousness:

*The luminous point that is called the ego,
Keeps glowing the spark of life in our corporeal body.
Through love it becomes more lasting,
More alive, more fervent, and more luminous.
Through love its essence is blazed up,
And its, bidden treasures are evolved.
The ego acquires lire from love,
And learns how to illuminate the universe with this fire.
It is love that brings peace as well as conflict to the world.
Love is the Water of life as well as the well-tempered sword.
Learn the art of being a lover and aspire for loveliness,*

*Strive to attain the eyes of Noah and aspire for Job's heart.
Discover alchemy in a handful of mud.
And kiss the threshold of sublimity.*

Subsequently he tells us who that the beloved is whom the Muslims should love so devotedly:

*The beloved is hidden in Thy heart.
If thou art gifted with eyes, come, I will show thee his face.,
His lovers are lovelier than all the beloved of the world,
More beautiful, more elegant and more loveable.
Through his love the heart gains strength,
And the earth attains the exalted status of the Pleiades.
The land of Najd was made vigilant ingenious through his grace,
In a state of ecstasy it flew higher than the heavens.
The heart of the Muslim in the seat of al-Mustafa.
Whatever respect we command is due to his name.
Mount Sinai is nothing but dust that arose from his House,
His parlor is sacred even for the Ka'bah.
The mat is grateful to him that he prefers to sleep on it,
The Ṭāq-e Kistrā is trampled under the feet of his Ummah.
He retired to the privacy of the Cave of Ḥirā',
And brought forth a nation, a constitution and a government,
Night after night passed by his bedside finding him awake,
So that his people could rest on the throne of Khusrōm.*

He gives an account of the Prophet (S) and his high qualities. Not only here alone, but throughout his poetical works we can see an unceasing stream of his love for the Prophet (S) gushing out wave after wave.

A contemporary Pakistani scholar has written a book about Iqbal entitled *Iqbal dar rah-e Mawlawi* (Iqbal on the Path of Mawlawi), in which he states that whenever a poem that contained the Prophet's sacred name was recited in Iqbal's presence, spontaneously tears flowed from his eyes. Indeed he passionately loved the Prophet (S). Iqbal has made out a very important point. Where can the world of Islam find a personage more popular and dearer than the Prophet of Islam (S)? His personality is the focal point of the unity of the Islamic world. Iqbal, while narrating the story of the daughter of Ḥātīm aṭ-Ṭā'ī, says that in one of the battles the daughter of Ḥātīm

aṭ-Ṭāṭ was taken captive and brought in the presence of the Prophet (S). Her feet were chained and her head and body were bare. The disrespect showed to the daughter of a great and generous person like Ḥātim was so shocking that the Prophet (S) took out his cloak and flung it towards her so that she might cover herself. Iqbal concludes this story with the following verses:

*We are more naked than the Lady of aṭ-Ṭāṭ.
 We are stripped of our robe of honor before the nations.
 He is the source of our credibility on the Day of Judgment,
 In this world, too, it is he whose love covers our faults.
 We, who do not recognize any boundaries and nationalities,
 Like vision from the two eyes, are one in reality.
 We may belong to Hijaz, Egypt or Iran,
 But we are the dew-drops of the same laughing dawn.
 The eyes of the keeper of the tavern of Batha' have intoxicated
 us,
 We are like, the goblet full to the brim with this wine,
 Like a hundred-leaf flower we smell alike,
 For it is he who breathes life into this bouquet, and he is one.*

On so many occasions Iqbal has composed verses expressing his deep love for the Prophet (S) that it is not possible to quote all of them here.

In *Asrār-e khudī* (The Secrets of the Self) he tries to awaken the sense of selfhood, that is, the sense of human identity in the individual as well as the society. A separate section in 'The Secrets of the Self' deals with the idea that the selfhood is weakened by entreaty. When an individual or a nation stretches its hands in need before others, this act weakens the individuality of a person or the nation and, consequently, the process of deterioration sets in.

As a sequel to the problem of ego Iqbal elucidates the problem of selflessness. While discussing the problem of the self, the notion of the strengthening an individual's identity should not be interpreted in the sense of imprisoning one's being within the walls constructed around the self and living in isolation, cut off from other human beings as independent egos. Nor does it mean that one should lose his identity among other selves in the society. Rather an individual should live in close relationship with the society. This is the real meaning of the selflessness. The book *Rumūz-e bākhudī* (The

Secrets of the Selflessness) is the second book of Iqbal that was composed and printed after *Asrār-e khudī* and is illustrative of Iqbal's ideas about the Islamic System. Iqbal's ideas about establishing an Islamic order are more elaborate and clearer in *Rumūz-e bīkhudī* than any other of his works. On the whole, the problems elucidated in *Rumūz-e bīkhudī* are among the issues relevant to the establishment of an Islamic society and ought to be taken into consideration.

While going through the themes of the secrets of the selflessness, we notice that Iqbal paid attention exactly to the same questions that are predominant in our Islamic society today. The foremost among the most exciting ideas of Iqbal is his emphasis on the mission of the followers of *tawhīd*. He believed that the Muslims and the Islamic Ummah are bound to spread the message of Islam and they should not rest unless they perform this duty.

It would be interesting, at this juncture, to quote a few selected verses of Iqbal in this regard. In these verses he says that the formation of an Islamic society and the emergence of an Islamic Ummah in this world have not been a simple matter. The world had to wait for ages and history had to undergo countless experiments in order to reach the conception of *tawhīd* and to arrive at a stage where an Ummah inspired with the ideal of *tawhīd* and a people faithfully following Islamic thought could have evolved:

*This ancient body called the world
Is constituted by the intermixing of the mother elements.
A hundred reed-beds were cultivated to produce a single melody;
A hundred gardens bled for ages to make a tulip bloom;
Thousand and thousand images were conceived, carved, and
erased
So that thine image could be engraved on the tablet of being.
Countless whimpers and tears were sown and nurtured in the soul
To let a prayer-call blossom out.
For ages the world was at war with noble souls,
And it favored the worshippers of false gods.
At last the seed of faith was implanted in the earth,
And the word of tawhīd found expression through thy lips.
The center of the cycles of the universe is lā ilāh;
The ultimate end of all action in the world is lā ilāh.
It is the force that keeps the heavens rotating,
It is what gives the sun its light and life,*

*It is the force that gives birth to pearls in the ocean's womb,
 And keeps the waves surging and moving all the time.
 Its morning breeze transforms the soil into flower,
 Its fire breathes a nightingale's song into a handful of feathers;
 Its flame runs through the veins of the vinegrape;
 Its heat makes the goblet-clay to glow as a spark;
 Its tunes are asleep within the strings of being
 Waiting for thy plectrum to fill the air with music.
 Thine existence shalt vibrate with a hundred songs -
 Arise and strike thy plectrum at its strings.
 As takbir is the secret of thine existence,
 The purpose of thy creation is to preserve and spread the message
 of la ilah.
 Unless the world echoes with the vibrations of the call of Truth,
 If really a Muslim, thou shalt not rest.
 Hast thou not read the verse in the Mother of books
 That bestowed upon thee the title of the Just Ummah?
 Thou art the luster of the visage of time,
 Thou art made witness to the deeds of all the nations;
 Extend thine invitation to all who are punctilious.
 Thou hast to disseminate the treasures of the knowledge of the
 Ummi (S),
 Whose words were not polluted with lust of any kind,
 Whose words interpreted the meaning of the verse:
 "Whose comrade erreth not, nor is deceived".
 He washed the tunics of his garden's tulips clean
 And purified them from all impurities.*

After elucidating the all-embracing nature of Islamic teachings (which has been done a hundred times in his work), Iqbal addresses the *Ummah* of *tawhīd*, declaring that they are the standard-bearers of Islam, and appealing to them to march forward with the purpose of delivering the message of Islam to the world. Subsequently he asks them to break into pieces the new idol carved by the swindlers of the West. What is this new idol?

*Thou who hast the Book under thine arms
 Should step forward in the arena of action.
 The human mind is always after carving a new idol;
 Man's quest for a new image has not ceased in any age,
 Again he has rebuilt the temple of Adhar (the idol-maker),
 And has molded a god, newer than others,*

*Whose joy lies in shedding the blood of his worshippers.
His are numerous names: color, country and race.*

It is implied in these verses that nationalism, racialism and narrow patriotism draw boundaries to isolate peoples and countries. These imprisoned loyalties cause wars between one nation and another in the name of nationality, community, race and color:

*Humanity is being sacrificed like a sheep
At the foot of the unholy idol.
Thou, who hast drunk from the goblet of Khalil (the idol-
breaker),
Thy veins are throbbing with the wine of the passion of Khalil.
Thou hast to strike the sword of "nothing exists except Him
Into false-hood disguised as truth.
Let thy face shine on the dark horizons of time,
And spread the perfect message that has been revealed to thee.*

Iqbal's idea of propagating the message of Islam and breaking all the artificial boundaries drawn to divide nations leads him to expound certain other notions that are predominant in his philosophy of *bikbudi* (selflessness), that is, the unification of the individual with the society and his absorption therein. According to him *nubunwah* (prophethood) is the principal source of the organization of the Ummah. This does not mean that a millah is formed by the mere gathering-together of many individuals. A particular mode of thinking and an ideology is essential in order to weave different threads together to form the fabric of a nation. For this purpose the most fundamental and the best of all the ideologies is the one that was propounded through *nubunwah*, the prophetic mission, which was propounded by the messengers of God. This is the best of all the foundation stones upon which a nation is built. This mode of thinking imparts reasoning, faith, discipline and perfection to a nation.

Another concept upon which Iqbal's system of thought rests is the negation of servitude - servitude to the demigods sitting on the throne and standing at the altar.

*Man worshipped man in the world.
He lived as a non-entity, as a non-being and as a subordinate*

*Under the heavy yoke of the Khusravs and the Qaysars.
And his neck, his hands and his feet were chained;
The Popes and the priests and the kings and the lords -
A hundred hunters after a single prey!
Both the king and the priest
levied taxes on his devastated harvest.*

Whatever was left after paying taxes to the King's officials was grabbed by the tax-collectors of the Pope. This had been a customary practice all over the world, as Iqbal says:

*Bishop, in the name of allotting apartments in the Paradise,
Set a trap in the church to catch him;
The Brahmin plucked the best roses of his garden;
The Magi's children made up their fire by adding his harvest to it
His human qualities were debased by slavery.
At last came the trustworthy, who restored the lost rights,
And entrusted the throne of the Khans to the slaves.*

Iqbal's poetry and philosophy - aimed at humanizing the world - are very rich in the themes of human and social significance, such as the Divine mission of the Prophet (S) of Islam, the equality of man, the Qur'anic doctrine of judging a person according to his *taqwā* (piety): ... "The noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the best in *taqwā*," and many other similar issues that are indicative of his concern for higher values and the service of mankind. We cannot propagate these ideas in our country without making popular and public the works of Iqbal. This is a task to be carried out in Iran and Pakistan as well as in the countries where people understand Persian and where people are prepared to learn the language.

The poetry of Iqbal, the major part of which is in Persian, needs wider circulation. Out of the fifteen thousand couplets composed by him, nine thousand are in the Persian language. This shows that his works in Urdu are fewer than those in Persian. Rather it can be said that the best and the finest part of his poetry is in our language, and, therefore, we are obliged to devote the best of our energies to understand it. When I first read Iqbal's poetry, I felt that many of his verses could be understood only with the help of detailed explanatory notes and comments, and, regretfully, I could find such commentaries nowhere. It is essential to compile such

annotated editions. Even those who use Persian script are in need of such commentaries in order to fully grasp the ideas and themes dealt with by Iqbal. Today the major part of Iqbal's teaching directly concerns us, and some part of it is also relevant to the world that has not gone our way so far and which has to understand it in the same manner as we did.

Our people have translated into action his doctrine of the selfhood. They have invigorated it and have brought it into action in the world of actuality. Now our people do not have to be asked to recover their selfhood. Today we are perfectly aware of being on our feet. We are proud of our culture and our cultural heritage and are confident that we can develop it further on the basis of our ideology and thought. Of course for a long time we were made to depend upon others regarding the material aspect of our life, but we are trying to get rid of these foreign fetters gradually, and this process is going on. The Muslim peoples are in need of comprehending the meaning of selfhood; especially the eminent Muslims, whether they are politically active or culturally creative, need to embrace Iqbal's message. They have to realize that Islam in itself, in its essence and in its nature, possesses the richest potentialities of conducting the affairs of the individual lives and human societies, and does not need to look towards others. We do not advocate for summarily dismissing other cultures and closing our doors to them. We should assimilate them, but in the manner as a living body absorbs the elements that are essential for its life, and not like a dead and unconscious body which is injected by others whatever they desire to inject into it. We have the capacity of assimilating from other cultures whatever is relevant to us. As Iqbal has said repeatedly, we can learn the modern science and philosophy from the West, but the ardor and zest for life can never be borrowed from others:

*Wisdom we have learnt from the teachings of the
Western thinkers.*

*Ardor for life we have acquired in the company of
men of insight.*

It means that the Western society and culture is wanting in ardor and fervor, and Iqbal was quicker than any other person in perceiving this phenomenon. He could anticipate the dangers inherent

in the Western civilization and its materialistic culture, and warned the people in advance that it was devoid of the spiritual elements essential for human welfare. Fortunately, today the consciousness of selfhood and Islamic identity is abounding in our country among the people. Our policy based on the principle of "Neither the East nor the West" is in conformity with what Iqbal advised and wished to be pursued. Our policy of self-reliance is identical with Iqbal's views. We, in our love for the Prophet (S), in our commitment to the Qur'an, in our emphasis on learning the Qur'an, and in our conviction that the Qur'an and Islam are to be made the basis of all the revolutions and movements, are exactly following the path that was shown to us by Iqbal. At that time, nobody was attentive enough to pay heed to Iqbal's counsel. In those days there were not many people who could understand Iqbal's message and his language. Iqbal's books are replete with complaints and remonstrances - remonstrances as to why people do not understand his message and look towards the West for guidance. In his introduction to *Rumūz-e bīkhubī* also he remonstrates with the Islamic Ummah.

*Thou wert appointed to be, the seal of all nations,
Thou wert destined to be the end of all the beginnings;
Thine 'ulamā' were made equal to prophets;
Thy martyred comrades could breathe life into the hearts.
Why art thine eyes enchanted by the beauty of the church?
Why hast thou fallen away from the path of the Holy Ka'bah?
Believe me. The dust of thy street rises to form heavenly spheres;
O thy visage attracts the eyes of the entire world.
Why art thou rising and falling restlessly like a wave?
What is that spectacle thou art going to behold?
Learn the secret of living passionately on your own from the
moth;
Build thy nest amidst the tongues of flames.
Kindle the fire of love from within thy soul;
Restore thy bond with the spirit of al-Mustafa.
I have left the company of the church-goers,
To see to it that the veil is raised from thy face.
O my comrade, thou art bewitched by the charm of others
And singing odes to praise golden locks and rosy cheeks.*

Here, by the epithet *hamnawa* (comrade) Iqbal means to refer to his contemporaries and those who were of late introduced to the Western culture and were intoxicated with the Western value-system. He compares their attitude with that of his own:

*He rubs his forehead at the foot of the Sagi,
He is lost in the story of the Magi's children,
While I bleed, struck by the crescent of thine eyebrows,
Happy that my blood is soaked in the dust of thy street.
My art has been over and above eulogizing worldly lords,
My head never bowed before imperial courts.*

He reminds the Muslim Ummah that it has never been his custom to sing praises, but he eulogized her so passionately because of his deep love for Islam:

*Poetry bestowed upon me ability to make a mirror out of words,
And it has freed me from asking Alexander's favor.
I hate to be burdened by the favors of others.
My lips are purses and hands shut like a bud in the garden.*

After giving free vent to his feeling of disdain and indifference to the worldly attainments, Iqbal, who never humbled himself by prostrating before anybody, kneels down on his knees in front of the Muslim Ummah and begs them to realize their own worth and pay heed to the words of the Qur'an:

*At thy door my soul is bleeding to beg a small favor of thee,
In return it offers thee all her ardor and pathos.
A river comes down trickling from the blue sky,
Its water is distilled through my burning heart,
And I direct its course through channels thinner than rivulets,
To make it steadily flow and water thine orchard.*

This was just a brief account and a short glimpse of our dear Iqbal's personality, who was undoubtedly a bright star on the horizon of the East. We hope that we shall acknowledge our indebtedness to him and would be able to recompense for the delay made by our people in recognizing Iqbal's worth during the span of last forty, fifty years. I request the researchers, poets, orators, writers,

publishers, the government organizations, the Ministry of Culture and Advanced Learning, the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, each of them, to do their best to reintroduce and revive the spirit of Iqbal in the manner befitting his memory. I propose that his poetry and his writings be reproduced and compiled in the form of books, and his poetical works like *Asrār-e kbudī* (The Secrets of the Self), *Rumūz-e bīkbudī* (The Mysteries of Selflessness), *Gulshān-e rāz* (Garden of Mystery), *Javid nāmeḥ* (Pilgrimage to Eternity), etc. be reprinted and each of them published separately. This work has been done in Pakistan to some extent, but the people of Pakistan cannot fully benefit from those ideas as today the Persian language is not in currency there as in the past. I wish this gap also to be filled. It is further hoped that our Pakistani brothers present in this meeting, as well as the writers of the Indian subcontinent, realize their responsibility and rise to the occasion to resist the vicious policies of the past governments regarding the Persian language, which possesses great treasures of Islamic culture and in which the major part of Islamic culture is preserved. They should give currency to this language in the Subcontinent where there are great numbers of Muslims; especially in Pakistan this work needs to be done with a sense of urgency. In our own country also the publication of Iqbal's books should be carried out on a large scale and the artists should illustrate Iqbal's works with suitable paintings, the musicians should sing his poems set in popular tunes in order to render them effectively and bring to the tongues of the young and the old. I hope that God Almighty will enable us to repay the debt that the Muslim Ummah owes to him.

Wa as-salām 'alaykum wa rahmat Allāh wa barakatuh.

The Essence of Art

(Religion and Aesthetics)

1 The essence of art

The essence of art – any kind of art – is a divine gift. Although the existence of art depends on the way it is expressed, this is not the whole thing as far as the essence of art is concerned. Before any expression, there must be an artistic feeling and insight, and this is the essential point. After a beauty, a subtlety and a truth are perceived, a thousand subtle points emerge out of them. Artists use things that may be entirely obscure to non-artists to express certain subtleties and truths. They manage to do this through the light of art that is in their nature. This is genuine art which results from an insight, a reflection of a truth and an expression.

2 The value of art

The value of art should first be appreciated by artists, and they should respect and pay attention to the value of the precious gift they have. Respecting this gift means that they should use their artistic talent appropriately. Imam Sajjad (a.s.) said, “Your human soul is the most valuable thing. Nothing but God’s promised Paradise can compensate for this soul. Do not trade it for anything but God’s Paradise.” Art is one of the most valuable parts of the human soul, and it should be appreciated. It should be used for the sake of God. Of course when it is said that art should be used for the sake of God, one should not immediately think of superficiality and hypocrisy.

3 Art as a means

Today, art is the best means that is used by those who have a message for people – be it divine or evil. The crucial point

is that when using art as a means, the orientation should be precise, clear and appropriate, and no mistakes should be made as far as the orientation is concerned. Art is used in the modern world to instill the biggest lies into the minds of large groups of people, and it would have been impossible to do so in the absence of art. But they are doing this through the use of art. Cinema is a kind of art. Television programs are another kind of art. They use various kinds of artistic methods in order to be able to present a false message as a truth. Therefore, art is a means – a precious means. Sometimes the value of this means is raised so much that it becomes as important as the content. This is because it is impossible to convey the content to the hearts of people in the absence of artistic means.

4 Art as a means of promoting thoughts

Art speaks through an eloquent language. No language is as eloquent as the language of art. Neither the language of science, nor ordinary language, nor the language of preaching is as eloquent as the language of art. A lot of importance should be attached to art, and it should be glorified on a daily basis. It is necessary to select excellent forms of art. In the absence of art, ordinary words would not find a place in the mind of a person, let alone become interesting and unforgettable. Art is the most important means that can be used to promote a thought – be it right or wrong. Art is a means of expression. Art is a medium – a very important medium. One should not ignore art or the importance of promoting it. It is not right to equate art with sins, falsities and other such things. Art is one of the most prominent and valuable creations of God, and it should be appreciated. Art should be used in all affairs, even in an ordinary advertisement.

5 General features of art

A general characteristic of art is that it exerts its effect without the speaker or the listener realizing this. Poetry, painting, singing, music and other forms of art affect the minds of the audience without them noticing. This is the best kind of effect. Allah the Exalted selected the most eloquent means of expression – namely, the Holy Quran – in order to express the loftiest teachings. Allah the Exalted could have used ordinary language to express Quranic and Islamic teachings, but He selected the most eloquent and beautiful form of artistic expression. The Holy Quran says that nobody can produce a work with a similar artistic structure, the meaning of which is clear.

6 Artistic talent

Of course art is not a wealth that is gained entirely through hard work. Unless the artist has an artistic talent, he will not go beyond the preliminary stages no matter how hard he tries. That artistic talent is not the result of hard work by the artist. Rather, the artist is born with the talent. God bestows all blessings on human beings through such channels as the physical environment, heredity and other things. In order to become an artist, people have to make efforts, but even the opportunity and determination to work hard are bestowed on them by God. Artists should develop their talents to perfection.

Every artist is a world in its own right, and this is a characteristic of the artistic talent that he enjoys. If one had the opportunity to listen to what artists have to say, one would see a strange and beautiful world – a combination of joys and sorrows, a combination of wishes, worries and ideals. Art is highly precious, and its value is not solely due to its power to attract hearts and eyes because there are many things that are not artistic, but they may attract certain hearts and eyes. Rather, art is a divine blessing – a divine gift.

7 The duty of artists

Art is an excellent reality, and those who have received this blessing from God should naturally take on certain responsibilities. That is to say, divine blessings are accompanied by responsibilities. These responsibilities are not necessarily religious. Many of these responsibilities originate from the heart. For example, vision is a blessing that some people lack. This blessing brings about certain pleasures and benefits, but it also puts some responsibilities on your shoulders. These responsibilities are the natural result of your vision, and it is not necessary for religion to stress this – it is not necessary to reveal a Quranic verse in this regard. This is something that the heart can realize. Similarly, there is nobody in the world who does not blame a wealthy person when he sees that the wealthy person mocks the poor or is indifferent to them. The wealthy person may say that he has gained his wealth on his own, but this is not acceptable. Whenever there is a fortune, a blessing, or an achievement, it is accompanied by certain responsibilities.

8 Requirements of time

I do not have an extensive knowledge of such arts as cinematic arts, visual arts and dramatic arts, but my knowledge of poetry and novels is more than general knowledge. I have read many of the existing works. If you take a look at Russian literature, you will suddenly realize that there is a curtain in the middle of it. That is to say, there is a separating wall. There are great works on both sides of this wall that belong to both sides. But when you take a look at the works of such authors as Sholokhov or Alexei Tolstoy, you see that they have a different taste. Alexei Tolstoy is a very good writer, and he has produced excellent novels. He was one of the pro-revolutionary writers of Russia, and his works contain the taste of modern times. You see the signs of Russian nationality in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, but you do not see the signs of the last 60 years. Leo Tolstoy's era

was a different era and his work was a different work. Basically, his work belongs to a different place. What shows the modern character of Russia? The works of Sholokhov and Alexei Tolstoy and other such writers show this. Therefore, the artist of every era is the person who is brought up in that era and belongs to that era. Otherwise, those who belong to an earlier era and write from memory do not really belong to the era they live in.

In order to present a perfect example of this, I need to mention a novel. I read a novel called *Heart of a Dog* which is written by a Russian author. This novel is science fiction, but it is not at all a modern work. It is a copy of earlier art. Even if we accept that it is not a copy of English, American, or French works, it is definitely a copy of the art of the era before the October Revolution. It is not the art of the current era. It is a short novel, but it is very artistic. It has been translated into Farsi and published in Iran. *Heart of a Dog* is an anti-revolutionary novel that was written around 1925 or 1926 – that is to say, during the early years of the Russian Revolution. The author of this novel protests against revolution and certain other things. He mocks them – just like some of the works that we have witnessed inside our own country. This novel is not at all part of Russian literature. It could have been propagated throughout the world. We cannot say that it was thwarted by the iron curtain of the Stalin era. That was not the case. Why did it not spread throughout the world? Why did it not become known as a prominent work in the world? This is while *Quietly Flows the Don* gained international fame. *Quietly Flows the Don* is not just about Russia – it has been translated into different modern languages of the world. That is to say, it is a revolutionary work.

9.0 Committed Art

9.1 Commitment to Humanity

Some people say that in “committed art” there is a contradiction between the first and the second word. “Committed” means chained, and “Art” is whatever that is based on free imagination. How is it possible to reconcile the two? This is one conception of committed art. Of course this conception is not right. The responsibility and commitment of the artist is primarily rooted in being a human rather than being an artist. After all, an artist is primarily a human being rather than an artist. Human beings cannot be free of responsibilities. The first responsibility of human beings is their responsibility towards other human beings. Although human beings are responsible towards nature, the earth and outer space, their main responsibility is towards other human beings.

9.2 Commitment to Art

The artist is responsible towards both the form and the content of his works. Those who enjoy an artistic talent should not be satisfied with a low level of achievement. This is a commitment. A lazy artist who makes no efforts to improve his artistic works and come up with innovative ideas has in fact failed to fulfill his responsibilities as an artist as far as form is concerned. Artists should make constant efforts. Of course sometimes people may reach a point where it is no longer possible for them to make further efforts. There is nothing wrong with this. But artists should work as hard as possible to improve the form of art. It is not possible to achieve this commitment to form in the absence of enthusiasm, love and sense of responsibility. Of course this enthusiasm and love are part of an artist's responsibilities, which act as a powerful hand that prevents lazy inaction and encourages human beings to engage in action.

9.3 Commitment to content

If human beings are honorable, their hearts and minds also deserve respect. It is not right to present everything to the audience simply because they are paying attention to what the artist is saying. We need to see what the artist is trying to say. Considering what one wants to say is a virtue. If I remember correctly, I once quoted Romain Rolland as saying every artistic work is one percent art and ninety nine percent ethics. To be more cautious, let us say every artistic work is ten percent art and ninety percent ethics. I realized that Rolland's comment is not a precise comment. If I were asked a similar question, I would say every artistic work is 100 percent art and 100 percent ethics. These two are not necessarily inconsistent. One should present 100 percent of one's artistic work through artistic innovation and fill 100 percent of it with content that promotes virtues and lofty and enlightening ideas. Therefore, "committed art" is a consistent phrase. Some of the people who care about artistic issues are worried that the artist may act against human virtues and ethics under the pretext of freedom of imagination and artistic freedom. This is a very important point.

9.4 Commitment to innovative ideas

The artist should consider himself committed to a truth. What is that truth? The level of an artist's intellectual capability to see this truth in its entirety or part of it is irrelevant to what I want to say. Of course the higher the level of an artist's intellectual capabilities, the better the artist can present his subtle perception of that truth. Hafiz of Shiraz was not just an artist. There are great teachings in his words. Artistic talent alone is not enough to help one gain access to these teachings. There are philosophical and intellectual requirements too. This artistic expression and perception should be supported by intellectual innovation. Of course people are not all at the

same level in terms of their intellectual capabilities, and they are not expected to be like this. This is true of all artistic fields including architecture, painting, designing, sculpture, dramatic arts, poetry and music. Think of an architect who has good ideas and another architect who does not have innovative ideas at all. When these two architects want to design a building, they proceed in two different ways. If you have them build a city together, one half of the city will be totally different from the other half.

9.5 Commitment to the goal

Committed art is a truth, and it should be recognized. An unprincipled person with mundane – and sometimes base and unwholesome – motives cannot go after art and become successful. This is because genuine artistic joy will come into being only when the artist knows what he is looking for and what he wants to do so that he can feel satisfied and happy with his artistic talent. Artistic joy is different from the kind of joy that ordinary people feel, and non-artists cannot feel it. In this case, the artist should pay attention to ethical values and lofty religious teachings and virtues.

10.0 Art and religion

10.1 The definition of religious art

Religious art is the kind of art that can exhibit and present religious ideals. Of course Islam enjoys the best ideals among all divine religions. These ideals are the same things that provide happiness, spiritual rights, piety, spiritual education and social justice. Religious art should not be confused with superficial and ossified art.

Religious art does not at all mean superficiality and hypocritical pretension, and this kind of art is not necessarily created with religious words. Some artistic works may be

purely religious, but only ordinary and non-religious words may be used in them. It is not right to think that religious art is necessarily the kind of art that pictures a religious story or speaks about a religious concept such as spirituality and similar things. Religious art is the kind of art that can promote the teachings that all divine religions – and above all Islam – have tried to promote among human beings, and pure lives have been sacrificed to propagate these truths and make them permanent in minds. These teachings are lofty religious teachings. They are the kind of teachings that all divine prophets have made great efforts to introduce into human life. We cannot just criticize or be indifferent to the efforts of the best human beings of creation – that is to say, reformers, prophets, and selfless people who made efforts in the way of God. Religious art propagates these teachings. Religious art presents justice to society as a value although it may not even contain a word related to religion, a Quranic verse or a religious icon – these things are not essential to religious art. You can use the most eloquent words in dramatic arts to promote justice, in which case you have paid attention to religious art.

10.2 The direction of religious art

Some people think that art equals frivolity, lack of religion and promiscuity. This is wrong. The focus of attention in religious art is that this kind of art should not be at the service of lust, violence, dissipation and transformation of the identity of people and society. Art is one of the beautiful manifestations of creation. The wrong direction of art is problematic and has always been criticized by insightful people. It is wrong to channel art towards promiscuity and deception of man. Otherwise, if art is combined with the spirit of religion and a religious orientation, it will be one of the most prominent features of man.

10.3 The Holy Quran, the peak of art

The Holy Prophet of Islam (s.w.a.) utilized all the means that were available to him in order to promote this thought. He even utilized art, not just ordinary art, but the best form of art – namely, the Holy Quran. One of the secrets behind the success of the Holy Quran is its artistic form. The Holy Quran is the peak of art. It is extraordinary. The Holy Quran contains very unusual artistic qualities which are impossible for human beings to describe. If you read the Holy Quran from the beginning to the end, you will see that it is full of monotheism and enmity towards polytheism, idolatry and Satan – which is the symbol of evil. The same is true of the Holy Prophet's (s.w.a.) words.

If the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) had spoken to people without using an artistic language, he would have definitely attracted some people, but he could not have given rise to that great storm. It is the power of art that can do such things. Artistic works are like this.

11.0 Art and politics

11.1 Political abuse of art

In the modern world politics uses art inappropriately. The claim that politics does not do this is totally uninformed. Not only does politics abuse art in the modern world, but it has been doing this from a long time ago. I received a translation of a document about the Mordad 28 Coup published by the US Department of State. Of course, I was about 14 or 15 years old when this event took place, and I remember very few things. I have heard a lot about the event, and I have read extensively about it, but the document that was published by the US Department of State is much more detailed. The document was written and sent to the US Department of State and the CIA by those who were directly involved in the

event. This document belongs to the Americans. Of course the operation was carried out jointly by the Americans and the British, which has also been completely reflected in the report. The part that I want to focus on is where Kermit Roosevelt says when they arrived in Tehran, they were carrying a big suitcase full of articles that were supposed to be translated and published in Iranian newspapers. Roosevelt also says that they had brought with them some caricatures. Think about it: Fearing that the US may be outdone by the U.S.S.R., the CIA used all the means – including artistic means – in order to bring down a government that did not agree with them and refused to preserve their interests. They used all the means to bring down a government that was founded on the votes of the people – unlike all Pahlavi governments, the government they wanted to overthrow was a populist government that had been established legally through an election. Of course they must not have found a trustworthy caricaturist for their purpose at that time, so they brought caricatures with them. It is said in the document that they had asked the CIA to provide those things. As it happens, a book was published in Italy some years ago in which there is a mention of the CIA's art department and its different activities. This is how art is used by politics.

11.2 Art at the service of arrogant powers

Unfortunately the enemies of Islam and Iran and the enemies of our honor and dignity have been abusing art as well as other things. They are abusing poetry, painting, stories, films, dramatic arts and other kinds of art as a means to suppress virtues, destroy spiritual and Islamic truths and virtues, and develop a tendency towards materialism and material pleasure.

Cinema is a very advanced modern art, and today Hollywood is the most prominent and the most capable movie industry in the world. See what purpose and whose purpose Hollywood is serving. See what thoughts and orientations it is promoting. Hollywood is at the service of promoting

promiscuity, nihilism, lack of human identity and violence. It is at the service of keeping people busy with one another so that the ruling class can live peacefully. This huge film industry has brought together tens of big film companies, artists, directors, actors, playwrights, scriptwriters, and they are all moving ahead at the service of certain common goals – namely, the goals of the arrogant policies that are used to run the American government as well. This is not something insignificant.

Although they say art should be independent from politics and political orientations, their behavior shows the opposite. The arrogant powers of the world have deployed art, cinema, films, poetry, writing, minds, reasoning and philosophy to secure their arrogant interests and plundering – the manifestations of today's capitalism. America is the military power, and the companies behind the American government are the economic powers. They are using all the available means to set models for people of the world, and the nations of the world are not capable of presenting rival models.

12 Economy and art

The living conditions of artists are not really good, and in many places their conditions are not even acceptable. Those who invest in arts and are committed to certain principles cannot often make enough money. It is necessary to provide economic assistance for them. If they are not assisted, they will go after something that can help them make money. As cinema professionals say, such people may go after box office success, which is not always a good thing. This factor can partly explain the tendency towards showing sex and similar things in movies. Artists should not provide the hearts and minds of youth with something that may attract them to sins and corruption. This is different from providing them with freedom and options. Emotional issues do not leave people an option. They drag people in a certain direction without giving them an option. The situation must be such that the artist can present his art

without any pressure – the pressure to attract costumers – so that they can produce appropriate and perfect works.

13 Materialist view of art

The materialistic view of spiritual wealth has caused spiritual wealth to be measured against money in the world. How much money can this knowledge produce? How much money can this art produce? But there is a different criterion in Islam. This is not to say that Islam is reluctant to turn knowledge, art and other kinds of spiritual wealth into money. No, knowledge is a means to provide welfare. Art is a means to make life interesting and valuable. Nothing is wrong with this. But apart from this view, spiritual wealth itself is highly valuable from an Islamic point of view. That is to say, the fact that the artist has an artistic talent is itself a value from an Islamic point of view even if nobody knows about his art or nobody benefits from it. Due to lack of the necessary facilities or experience, it may not be possible in a certain society to pay money in return for knowledge, research, art and other kinds of spiritual wealth. This is undoubtedly true of our society and many other parts of the world. This should not put an end to the production of knowledge and artistic works.

On Women (On Gender Relations)

1.0 The role of women in society

1.1 The role of women in a human community

The issue of women and how they are treated in different communities is an issue that has been discussed among different communities and civilizations for a long time. Women always constitute half of the world's population. Life in this world is as much dependent on men as it is on women. Naturally, women shoulder the greatest responsibilities in the world. They do essential things such as giving birth to and educating children. Therefore, the issue of women is an important issue and has been discussed in societies among intellectuals for a long time.

1.2 Having an appropriate view of women

One should have a high regard for women in order to understand their rights and freedoms. In order to understand women's rights and freedoms, one should look at them as human beings who can be a resource for society by helping to educate moral humans. Women should be looked upon as the main element in the formation of a family. Although families are made up of both men and women, and both men and women play a role in the formation of a family, the peaceful atmosphere inside a family is due to the existence of women and their womanly nature. One should have such a view of women in order to understand how women can move towards perfection and what their rights are.

1.3 Historical oppression of women

Throughout history, women have been oppressed in different societies. This is due to the ignorance of human beings. Whenever there is use of force, the more powerful people tend

to oppress the weaker ones. This force may come either from within humans, from strong faith, which is very rare, or from an outside force that is exerted by the law. This is part of the nature of ignorant humans.

Unfortunately, women have always been oppressed. This is mainly due to not recognizing the true position of women. Women should find their true position, and they should not be oppressed just because they are women. This is something very bad. Women have been oppressed in many ways. Sometimes certain things have been done in regard to women that may not be called oppression, but they are in fact a type of oppression. A case in point would be directing women towards luxury, consumerism, wearing make-up, extravagance, and becoming an object for use. This is a great oppression against women. This is possibly the greatest oppression against women because it will completely prevent them from achieving their goals and ideals and will lead them towards petty and worthless goals.

1.4 The issue of women in the world

Despite all its claims, all the efforts made by committed and sympathetic people and all the cultural activities that have been carried out in regard to the issue of women, humanity has so far failed to find an appropriate solution to the issue of women, as a result of which the issue of men is raised also.

In other words, extremist measures, deviations, and lack of proper understanding of the issue have resulted in oppression, violation of rights, psychological shortcomings, family problems, and problems about the way men and women should interact with each other. These are among the problems which humanity has so far failed to solve. In other words, human beings who have made numerous discoveries in materialistic issues, in astronomy, and in the depths of the seas and who claim to have in-depth knowledge in the field of psychology and social and economic issues have truly made progress in many of these fields but are unable to solve this problem.

1.5 The role of *ḥijāb* in society

In Islam, there is a distance between men and women. This does not mean that women live in a different world than men. This is not the case. Men and women live together in society and in the workplace. They interact with each other in many places. They solve social problems together. They solve the problems of war together. They manage families and bring up children together. But that distance is maintained outside the home and the family environment. This is the main point in an Islamic model. If this point is not observed, the same corruption that is prevalent in the West will happen here too. If this point is not observed, women will no longer be the pioneers of moving towards values, as they are in Islamic Iran.

The issue of *ḥijāb* is not intended to isolate women. Those who have such a perception of *ḥijāb* are mistaken. The purpose of *ḥijāb* is to prevent men and women from interacting with each other without observing any boundaries. Such an interaction would be detrimental to society and both men and women, particularly women. *Ḥijāb* helps women reach the lofty moral position they deserve and prevents them from moral deviation.

Any effort to defend women should be based on safeguarding women's morality. Morality is a means of bringing about honor and respect for women in the eyes of others, even in the eyes of licentious men. Islam stresses the issue of women's morality. Of course morality for men is important too. It is not limited to women only. Men should also maintain their morality.

In places where women are encouraged to ignore *ḥijāb* and immodest clothes are encouraged, women's security will be undermined in the first place. Then the security of men and youth will be undermined too. Islam has introduced the issue of *ḥijāb* to help men and women carry out their duties in society.

1.6 The role and duties of women

In an Islamic society, men and women enjoy sufficient freedoms. Islam works in this regard and the equal social duties that Islam has assigned to men and women bear testimony to this fact. The Prophet Muhammad (s.w.a) said: "One who spends a night without caring about the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim." What the Holy Prophet (s.w.a) said is not limited to men only. Women should also feel responsible towards the affairs of Muslims, Islamic society, the world of Islam, and everything that happens in the world. This is an Islamic duty. Hazrat Fatimah (s.a) was present in all the events that happened in Medina, which was the center of all political and social events of that time, after the Holy Prophet (s.w.a) emigrated from Mecca to Medina. This is a model for women to follow and is indicative of the role of women in an Islamic system.

According to an āyah in the Sūra Al-Aḥzāb [āyah 35], men and women are equal in regard to being faithful, obeying God, being humble and truthful, fasting, being patient, guarding their morality, and remembering God. Women's activities in society are completely appropriate and acceptable. They should be active in society by observing Islamic limits. Women constitute half of society's work force. When both men and women are educated, the number of society's educated people will be doubled compared to when only men are educated. When women are also involved in teaching professions, the number of teachers will be doubled in society. There is no difference between men and women with regard to construction and economic activities and in planning the affairs of a country, city, village, group, or family. Everyone is responsible and should play a role in these fields.

1.7 The basis of women's social movements

Every social movement will only succeed if it is based on wisdom, thought, and logical and appropriate concepts. Similarly, every movement that is intended to defend the rights of women should be based on the same criteria. That is, every

movement should be based on wisdom and understanding of the realities of this world, understanding the nature of men and women, duties and responsibilities of men and women, and what can be shared by both men and women. Nothing should be based on imitation. Every movement that is based on imitation or blind decisions will be harmful.

1.8 The role of women in national development

If a country intends to engage in reconstruction in the true sense of the word, it should focus its attention on its human resources. When one speaks of human resources, it has to be noted that half of every country's population and human resources are comprised of women. If there is a misconception about women, reconstruction cannot be done in the true sense of the word or in a comprehensive manner. Women should be aware of the issue of women from an Islamic perspective in order to be able to defend their rights on the basis of Islamic principles. Similarly, men as well as all other members of society should be aware of the viewpoints of Islam in regard to women, their presence in different arenas of life, their activities, their education, their working, and their social, political, economic, and scientific activities. They should be aware of the role of women both inside and outside the family.

1.9 The necessity of acquiring knowledge

Women can receive academic education. There are some people who think that girls should not receive education. This is a wrong belief. Girls should study in fields which are useful for them and in which they are interested. Society needs educated girls in the same way it needs educated boys. Of course the atmosphere in which they study should be healthy. Ignoring the moral principles about the relationships between men and women is not a prerequisite for education. Rather, it is possible to acquire knowledge and reach high positions by observing these principles.

One of the basic things that should be done is to encourage women to read books. An innovative way should be worked out to encourage housewives to read books. Books are a source of knowledge for humans that helps them think about and understand matters better. They also help us introduce innovations and adopt better positions.

Knowledge is a valuable thing. I support the idea that in an Islamic society there should be female scientists in all fields. There were some women who think that women should only study gynecology and childbirth. This is not the case. Women should pursue their studies in different technical fields of medicine: cardiology, internal medicine, neurology, etc. This is both a religious and a social duty.

1.10 Women's employment

Islam is not opposed to women's employment. Not only is Islam not opposed to the employment of women, it considers it as necessary as long as it does not prevent women from fulfilling their most basic duty which is educating children and safeguarding the family. No country can afford to dispense with women's services in different arenas.

There are some people who have extremist views. There are some women who believe that they should not engage in social activities because it will prevent them from caring for their husband and children and dealing with household affairs. There are also some women who believe that they should not care for their husband and children because this prevents them from engaging in social activities. Both beliefs are wrong. They should not miss either one of the two for the sake of the other.

Of course the issue of employment is not of primary importance for women. Although Islam is not opposed to the employment of women, except in specific cases, this may or may not be agreed upon by all Islamic jurisprudents. The main issue regarding women is what has now been completely destroyed in the west, that is, the feeling of peace and security and having an opportunity to show their talents without being oppressed in society, in the family, or by their husbands and fathers. Those who are active in the field of women's affairs

should make efforts in this regard.

2.0 The role of women in the family

2.1 Islamic education of women

If an Islamic society can educate women according to an Islamic model, women can reach their true position. If women can acquire knowledge and gain the moral and ethical virtues which Allah the Exalted has specified for all humans, both men and women, they can educate their children better and the family atmosphere will become warmer and more pleasant. Also in this case, society will make more progress and the problems of life can be solved more easily. Therefore, men and women will have a prosperous life together. Islam does not intend to pit men against women. The purpose of Islamic teachings is not to cause a fierce competition between men and women. The goal of these teachings is to help women reach the same position as men by doing the same things as men do. In Islam, this is possible and has been done before.

One of the most important things is to teach women the right methods of treating their husband and children. There are some very good women who are very patient. But they do not know the right methods of treating their husband and children. These methods are tried and true. Over the years, these methods have improved as a result of the experience of humans in this regard. There are some people who possess useful experience in this regard. The ground should be prepared so that these people can instruct women in these fields.

2.2 The right to choose one's husband

Islam has given special attention to women, as spouses, from various perspectives. First is the issue of choosing a husband. From an Islamic perspective, women are free to choose their husband and no one can impose his or her opinion on women in this regard. This means that even a woman's brothers or her father, let alone more distant relatives, have no right to impose their opinion on a woman in regard to whom she should marry.

Of course there have been some wrong habits in Islamic communities over the years. But what some ignorant Muslims do should not be attributed to Islam. These are wrong habits. Ignorant Muslims do certain things based on their wrong habits, which has nothing to do with Islam and its holy principles.

2.3 Two examples of ignorance in marriage

If anyone forces a girl to marry her cousin, he has done something wrong. If a boy prevents his cousin from marrying another person because she did not marry him, he has carried out a *ḥarām* act, and those who help him are also guilty of a *ḥarām* act. These acts are against Islamic Shari'a and there is no difference of opinion among Islamic jurists in this regard.

If two tribes decide that a girl from one of the tribes should marry someone from the other tribe in order to settle a dispute and they do not ask for the girl's consent in this regard, they have done a *ḥarām* act. Of course, if they ask for the girl's consent, then there is nothing wrong with doing that. There might be a girl who is willing to marry a boy from another tribe and to solve a dispute too. In this case, there is nothing wrong with doing so. But if the girl is made to marry someone, the act is *ḥarām* from an Islamic perspective.

2.4 A place for peace

Peace is one of the most important things which humanity needs. Humans need to be away from anxiety and emotional turmoil in order to achieve prosperity. Peace is a feeling that one can only get from his family. This is the case for both men and women. There is a Quranic verse that says: "And of His sign is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves." This means that God created men for women and women for men. The phrase here "from yourselves" means that men and women are the same as one another. They have the same position. They are the same entity and have the same nature.

Of course men and women are different with regard to some of their characteristics. This is because they have different responsibilities. Then the verse continues: "That you might find quiet of mind in them." This means that the creation of two sexes among humans is aimed at a lofty goal, which is to bring about peace of mind for them. This is to help women find peace beside their opposite sex in the family. For men, living in the calm atmosphere of a family beside a kind, loving, and sincere wife is a means for finding peace. For women, having a man who loves them and whom they can rely on is a type of prosperity. It will bring about a sense of peace and prosperity to them. A family can bring about this feeling for both men and women. Men need women to find peace in the family and women also need men in the family to find peace. "That you might find quiet of mind in them." Men and women need each other in order to find peace.

2.5 The importance of women in a family

In fact, it is women who manage the family. Women, and not men, are the main element in a family. There might exist a family without a man. If in a family, the man is not present or has passed away, the woman can maintain the family if she is wise and cares about her family. But if the woman is taken away from a family, the man cannot maintain the family. Therefore, it is the woman who maintains the family.

The reason Islam has stressed the role of women in a family is that if a woman is committed to her family, cares about the education of her children, breast-feeds them, brings them up under her support, and feeds them with cultural food, Islamic principles, Quranic and instructive stories, as well as food for the body, then the different generations of that society will become successful. This is a special skill for women and is not in contradiction to education, teaching, working, entering politics, and similar things.

In all social plans, the family should be considered as the basis. Being a mother or a wife as well as the matter of the family are very basic and vital issues. This means that if a woman is the greatest expert in any field but is not a good

wife at home, then this is considered a weakness for her. The woman should be like a master in the house. This is a principle. If we are allowed to make an imperfect comparison, a woman can be likened to a queen bee.

2.6 Natural influence of women

Women naturally have a special influence on their husbands, except in special cases. Of course this does not mean that if a woman is dominant over her husband, we could say that she is influential on him. What I mean is their God-given power. Ultimately, I consider women to be stronger than men. This is my belief. In a confrontation, if the confrontation lasts for sometime, the person who wins will be the woman. This means that women will use the tools and powers which God has given to them and will overcome men. This is one of the beauties and mysteries of nature. Apart from their role in society, women can also play a role in encouraging men to fulfill their roles.

Men prefer to let their wife and children stay at home and fight alone. For instance, we were present on the battlefields, but we did not like to take our wives with us. We told them to stay and that we would go to the battlefields alone. But when women go to a battle, they take their husband with them and send them ahead. Women are like this. This characteristic, natural influence, and prominent role in the battlefields should be preserved.

2.7 The center of kindness

The divine nature of men and women brings about a relationship between them that is based on kindness and love.

A good relationship between men and women should be based on kindness, love, and friendship. They should like each other, show love towards each other, and treat each other kindly.

A family is a place where kindness and emotions should be promoted. Children should be treated with kindness. The husband, who is a man, and is in certain cases more fragile than the woman, needs his wife's kindness. This is the only thing that

will soothe a man. Sometimes even a mother's kindness is not as influential. For an adult man, his wife does what a mother does for her baby. And women who are perceptive know this point. If these emotions and feelings were not dependent on the existence of a main element in the family, which is the woman, then the family would be a meaningless unit.

2.8 Sharing duties

Men and women have different natural characteristics. Inside the family, women should not be expected to do the same things that men do or to have the same characteristics as men. Similarly, men should not be expected to have the same characteristics as women either. Men and women each have different natural and emotional characteristics. It is to the benefit of humanity and society that the emotional characteristics of men and women be taken into consideration in the family. If these characteristics are observed, both men and women will feel happy. But men and women do not have the right to oppress or try to dominate each other. There are some men who think that women have to do all the things that are related to them. Of course in a family a man and a woman who love each other will quite willingly do anything for each other. But doing things willingly is different from feeling or acting as if the woman has to act like a servant in the house. Such a notion does not exist in Islam.

2.9 Prioritizing the housework

There are some women who work outside the house. They do surgeries, visit patients, do scientific jobs, develop plans, and teach at universities. They do all these things. But they should think of housework too. Of course like all other things, the quantity of the housework can be sacrificed at the cost of its quality. This means that the quantity of the housework can be reduced. The presence of women at home twenty-four hours a day is one thing. It is quite another thing if the number of hours is reduced but the quality is increased. If women feel that working outside home has a negative effect on their household

duties, they should do something about it. This is a basic and important issue, except in exceptional cases. In all cases, there are necessities that are outside the scope of rules and what is common. For women, the most important thing is educating children and raising the spirits of their husbands for entering important arenas.

2.10 Educating children

Educating children is one of the duties of women in a family. Women who avoid giving birth to children because of their activities outside home act against human nature and their womanly nature. God will not be pleased with doing such a thing. Those who give up their duties towards children, educating them, breastfeeding them, and bringing them up in an atmosphere of kindness and passion, in order to do things that are not dependent on them, are doing something wrong. The best way to bring up children is by showing them motherly affection. Women who deprive their children of this God-given gift are doing something wrong. This is harmful to themselves, their children, and society. Islam does not allow such acts. One of the most important duties of women is to bring up their children with kindness and to educate them properly and carefully so that they are emotionally healthy when they grow up and do not suffer from any emotional complexes or the problems which currently afflict European and western youth.

Because western women did not care about the education of their children, western societies have now reached a position where millions of corrupt teenagers are involved in criminal acts. In European countries and the U.S., under the shadow of their materialistic civilization, their tall palaces, atomic bases, multi-story skyscrapers, and their scientific and technological advances there are thieves, assassins, drug dealers, and addicted people among their teenagers. What is the reason? This is because western women did not value the family.

2.11 The story of the flower and the gardener

From an Islamic point of view, men are supposed to protect women like a flower in the family. There is a tradition that says: "Women are flowers." This is not related to political and social arenas or the arena of acquiring knowledge. This is related to inside the family. "A woman is a flower and not a servant at home." By saying this, the Holy Prophet (s.w.a) has falsified the claim made by those who think that women have to work like a servant at home. Women are like a flower that needs to be taken care of. If you wrestle with a flower, its leaves will fall off. If you treat a flower like a flower [delicately], it will bring about beauty and will be noticed. Women who are emotionally and physically delicate should be viewed in this way.

In Islam, the womanly nature of women, on which all the needs and emotions of women are dependent, has been taken into consideration. That is, women are not forced to think, work, and act like men while they are women. This means that Islam takes into consideration the womanly nature of women, which is a natural characteristic of women and the basis of all their emotions and efforts. In the meantime, according to Islam, women are free to be present in such arenas as gaining knowledge, spirituality, piety, and politics. Islam has also encouraged women to acquire knowledge and to be present in different social and political arenas. Islam has also ordered that men do not have the right to impose their will on women or to ignorantly force them to do anything. This is the Islamic perspective on women.

2.12 Oppression of women in the family

Throughout the world, women suffer from numerous incurable problems. Women generally suffer from problems on two fronts: inside the family and in society. These problems are prevalent in European countries, the U.S. and countries that follow their model. These problems are more severe in some places as compared to others. In families, the rights of women are violated. That is, men sometimes oppress their wives. The greatest oppression towards women on the part of men is that

they do not consider women as their partners in life. They do not allocate all their emotions and time to women. Outside the home, men pursue their carnal desires. Inside the home, there is a cold atmosphere which lacks kindness. This is sometimes accompanied by a bad temper and different kinds of pressure. The most important point in a family is the point of interaction between a woman and her husband. One brings up a girl by tolerating many hardships and by showing her kindness and affection and teaching her to be kind towards her parents. That girl reaches her youth, and while she is still considered a child by her family, she gets married. Then they expect her to understand everything and to be able to do everything. Therefore, once she makes a small mistake, she gets criticized. This should not be the case.

If men have a feeling of possession in the family and look upon women as servants, then they have oppressed women. Unfortunately many men oppress women in this way. This is true outside the family too. It is a type of oppression against women if they are not provided with a secure atmosphere for studying, working, earning money, and resting. It is a type of oppression against women if they are not allowed to receive education and gain knowledge. It is a type of oppression if women cannot focus on their ethics and faith due to work pressure or other kinds of pressure. It is a type of oppression if women cannot use what they possess freely and in the way they like. It is a type of oppression if a husband is imposed on a woman, that is, if the woman has no role in choosing her husband. It is a type of oppression if women are not allowed to benefit emotionally from their children either when they are living with their family or when they are divorced from their husband. If women are not allowed to show their talent, for instance a scientific, political, or social talent or a talent for making discoveries, then this is a type of oppression too.

Essays on Philosophical
Theology



Ethics and Man

1.0 Spiritual problems

1.1 The essential characteristic of a Muslim

A Muslim is not somebody who simply believes in Islamic principles and engages in Islamic rituals. Rather, an essential characteristic of a Muslim is that he acts according to Islamic ethics. Otherwise, a person may have Islamic beliefs and may engage in Islamic rituals, such as daily prayers and fasting, but at the same time he may be envious, tight-fisted, spiteful, malevolent, lethargic and indecisive – such a person is not really a Muslim. A true Muslim should be educated in an Islamic way, should have Islamic knowledge and should act according to Islamic principles.

1.2 The root of human afflictions

Human afflictions can be traced back to spiritual corruption of man. Wherever there is a shortcoming or an affliction, it is because of discord, greed, malevolence, fear: fear of death, indulging in carnal desires or having a life of intemperance. These things are the main source of human afflictions.

1.3 The reason behind the decline of civilizations and nations

The decline of civilizations is the result of deviations. When civilizations reach their peak, they start to decline due to their weaknesses, shortcomings and deviations. Today we can see the signs of this decline in western civilization, which is the civilization of science without ethics, material life without spirituality, religion and power without justice. The decline of nations is not sudden; it is gradual. The keen eyes of western intellectuals in America and Europe have noticed this gradual decline. Normally in western societies the youth have a tendency towards promiscuity. They end up being

immodest. They develop a tendency towards delinquency. They are submerged in moral corruption. In any community, such a young generation would act like termites and destroy the foundations of that community, no matter how much knowledge or wealth the community has.

2.0 Ethics and society

2.1 The main values of a society

The ethical identity of a society is the real identity of that society. That is to say, the ethical framework of a society is the main characteristic of that society, and everything else in that society revolves around this axis. If a society takes care of its ethics, social justice will be taken care of. That society will prosper, and it will become heaven on earth. We see throughout the world that the majority of the tragedies human beings are suffering from are the result of moral corruption of the people of the world. Social justice mostly depends on ethics. Of course a major portion of social justice is related to the laws and regulations of a certain society. But laws and regulations will not be very effective if the people of a society do not enjoy divine and Islamic ethics. There are some people who earn huge amounts of money. They should not spend all their money on their own needs. This is materialistic ethics. This is satanic ethics, or more precisely, animal ethics. Whatever an animal has belongs to that animal alone. Human ethics, especially Islamic ethics, would not allow this. After addressing his essential needs, a human being should spend the rest of what he has on addressing the needs of the people of his society.

2.2 The line between an Islamic society and an ignorant society

There may be a society whose members enjoy appropriate ethical principles. The people of that society are selfless, intellectual, wise, benevolent, helpful, patient, steadfast and well behaved. The opposite situation may also exist. That is to say, there may

be a people whose relationships are based on greed rather than compassion, equity and good ethics. In such a society people tolerate each other as long as they do not pose a threat to each other's interests, otherwise they would be prepared to destroy each other. Such a society is called an ignorant society, and it is different from a society ruled by moral virtues, which is called an Islamic society. The Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) was sent down to invite people to moral virtues. Therefore, we can say that ethics is in fact one of the characteristics that distinguish an Islamic society from an ignorant society.

3.0 Ethics and life

3.1 Heaven on earth

Islam has demanded human beings to be kind towards one another. It has demanded human beings to care about one another's destiny and interests. It has demanded people to share in each other's grief. It has asked people to pray for each other. It has asked human beings to treat each other kindly. "And exhort one another to show compassion." [The Holy Quran, 90:17] Friendship, emotional bonds, benevolence and kindness among brothers, sisters, friends and members of an Islamic nation, these are very prominent characteristics. We need to strengthen these characteristics in ourselves. Putting oneself and one's material interests first is one of the worst human characteristics. Being prepared to get many people into trouble just to fulfill a personal need is one of the worst characteristics. A society in which there is no envy, miserliness, injustice, crime, greed, suspicion, plotting and malevolence is in fact heaven on earth. An Islamic society that has been purified is like heaven.

3.2 The relationship between wealth and ethics

Some people simplistically look at certain wealthy countries of the world and say, "These countries have wealth, yet they do not have religious faith and ethics, so we must follow the same path." They wrongly believe that these countries have become

wealthy because they do not have religious faith or ethics. This is a mistake. The power and wealth of those countries are the result of certain factors that bring about power and wealth. Wherever there is wisdom and hard work, there will be an outcome. This is a divine rule. Even those who are after material achievements will achieve what they want if they work hard and make appropriate strategic decisions. "We aid everybody – these as well as those – out of the bounty of your Lord." [The Holy Quran, 17: 20] This Quranic verse says this explicitly. When efforts are made for the sake of material gains, wealth and power will be achieved. But it will not be possible to achieve spiritual prosperity.

3.3 Ethics and management

Try to make your management as Islamic as possible. Islamic management means respect plus decisiveness. "So when you have decided, then place your trust in God." [The Holy Quran, 3: 159] After the Battle of Uhud, Allah the Exalted told His Messenger, "Thus it is due to mercy from God that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough and hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you. Pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them and take counsel with them in the affair. So when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah." [The Holy Quran, 3: 159] Allah the Exalted tells His Messenger, "When you have made up your mind, trust God and go ahead." This is the art of management: gentle but at the same time decisive, decisiveness and reliance on God in all conditions.

4.0 Ethics and knowledge

4.1 Knowledge must be accompanied by ethics

Somebody who is after knowledge needs to be pious. The more pious he is, the more he will come to like and appreciate knowledge. Knowledge must be accompanied by ethics, and industrial and scientific progress must be accompanied by ethical growth. Paying attention to God is the main factor that

can bring about ethical growth. If a society enjoys spirituality and ethics but lacks knowledge, this lack of knowledge will cause that society to collapse. This is because the enemy will come and sell his knowledge to that society but will take away its spirituality. Such a society may refuse to import knowledge for a while, but ultimately it will have no choice but to import the knowledge it needs. This happens when a society does not have a firm academic base. What happens if a country has good universities but lacks spirituality and ethics? This is even worse because knowledge will progress in the country, but this progress will work against human values. Knowledge will be at the service of oppression, arrogance, discrimination and immorality. Knowledge will even be at the service of betraying national ideals.

4.2 Separation of ethics from knowledge

Today the reason why the advanced knowledge and super-modern civilization of the west is not capable of delivering mankind is that their civilization is not accompanied by human values. Wherever there is knowledge, but human conscience, spirituality, morality, and emotions are absent, mankind will not be able to benefit from that knowledge. Knowledge in the absence of spirituality and morality would turn into an atomic bomb and take the lives of innocent people. This type of knowledge was used to manufacture weapons and kill civilians in Lebanon, occupied Palestinian lands and other parts of the world. This type of knowledge produced lethal chemical weapons that were used in Halabcheh and other parts of the world to kill women, children and young men and to destroy human beings and animals alike. Where did these chemicals come from? These deadly chemicals were produced by the scientific centers of European countries. They were the ones who produced these chemicals and gave them to a regime that was not considerate enough. Weapons and different scientific products have not been able to bring about happiness for human beings, for families and for men, women and children. This is because they were not accompanied by ethics and spirituality.

4.3 Medical ethics

A doctor should pay a lot of attention to the issue of ethics in two areas: Learning and teaching. We have Islamic ethics for learning. That is to say, learning is one area for practicing Islamic ethics: how to learn and what to learn from whom and for what purpose. These are all related to learning. "God bless those who take on a responsibility and do it appropriately." The same is true of learning. That is to say, learning well is one stage of ethics. The next stage is to practice what one has learnt with a patient at hospital or with a student at university. The writings of Hippocrates contain a lot of interesting and important points, which are mostly about patients. And this is the second area of medical ethics.

5 Ethics and politics: The dangers of separating politics from ethics

The world has come to accept that the leaders of human communities have special characteristics: arrogance, extravagant lifestyle, obstinacy, selfishness. The people of the world have come to accept that heads of governments should have these characteristics. Even the leaders of revolutionary governments, who used to live in tents and hide in dirty places, change their lifestyle as soon as they come to power. Their attitude changes, and they become exactly like other leaders and kings in the world. Imam Khomeini (r.a.) changed this wrong belief and showed that the popular leader of a nation and the Muslims of the world can have a simple lifestyle. He showed that a popular leader can entertain his guests in a Hussayniyyah instead of a sumptuous palace. He showed that a leader can treat the people like divine prophets. Two things pose a threat to politics. The first danger is that politics may drift away from ethics, spirituality and moral virtues. That is to say, evil motives may take over politics. The passions of certain individuals may take control of politics. The interests of the wealthy and powerful people of society may take control of politics and drag it in different directions. If politics suffers from this malady, then all aspects of social life will be affected. The second danger

is that shortsighted, childish and incompetent individuals may push aside competent people and take control of politics.

6.0 Ethics and art: Uniqueness of ethics and art

If human beings are honorable, their hearts and minds also deserve respect. It is not right to present everything to the audience simply because they are paying attention to what the artist is saying. We need to see what the artist is trying to say. Considering what one wants to say is a virtue. If I remember correctly, I once quoted Romain Rolland (1866-1944, French Nobel Prize Laureate for Literature 1915) as saying every artistic work is one percent art and ninety nine percent ethics. To be more cautious, let us say every artistic work is ten percent art and ninety percent ethics. I realized that Rolland's comment is not a precise comment. If I were asked a similar question, I would say every artistic work is 100 percent art and 100 percent ethics. These two are not necessarily inconsistent. One should present 100 percent of one's artistic work through artistic innovation and fill 100 percent of it with content that promotes virtues and lofty and enlightening ideas. Therefore, "committed art" is a consistent phrase. Some of the people who care about artistic issues are worried that the artist may act against human virtues and ethics under the pretext of freedom of imagination and artistic freedom. This is a very important point.

7.0 Ethical deviations

7.1 Freedom minus ethics

Western democracy is rooted in liberalism. They say because man is free, dictatorship should be abolished and replaced with democracy. The kind of freedom that liberalism is based on is absolute freedom. That is to say, if they want, the people can accept something that is certain to harm them. For example, just as the English legalized homosexuality in their parliament, so they may legalize heroin or incest only if they decide to do so. In this case there is no logical reason why they should

not listen to us. They have to accept what we say. What is the difference between homosexuality and incest? In this case they do not have a logical justification for what they do. Therefore, there are no logical limits to restrict this western freedom. If they say, "This is the point where freedom goes against ethics", we can say, "What ethics? There are no ethical limits. Everybody is free." This is because liberalism is based on freedom, and no limits can restrict this freedom unless one kind of freedom goes against another kind of freedom or against the essence of communal freedom. This is the only red line that they have. In fact by relying on the philosophy of liberalism, western democracy proves its hollowness. Then all ethical values may be destroyed in society. Today those who believe in western democracy are not prepared to acknowledge this. But this is the inevitable consequence of accepting the philosophy behind liberal democracy.

7.2 Drifting away from ethics

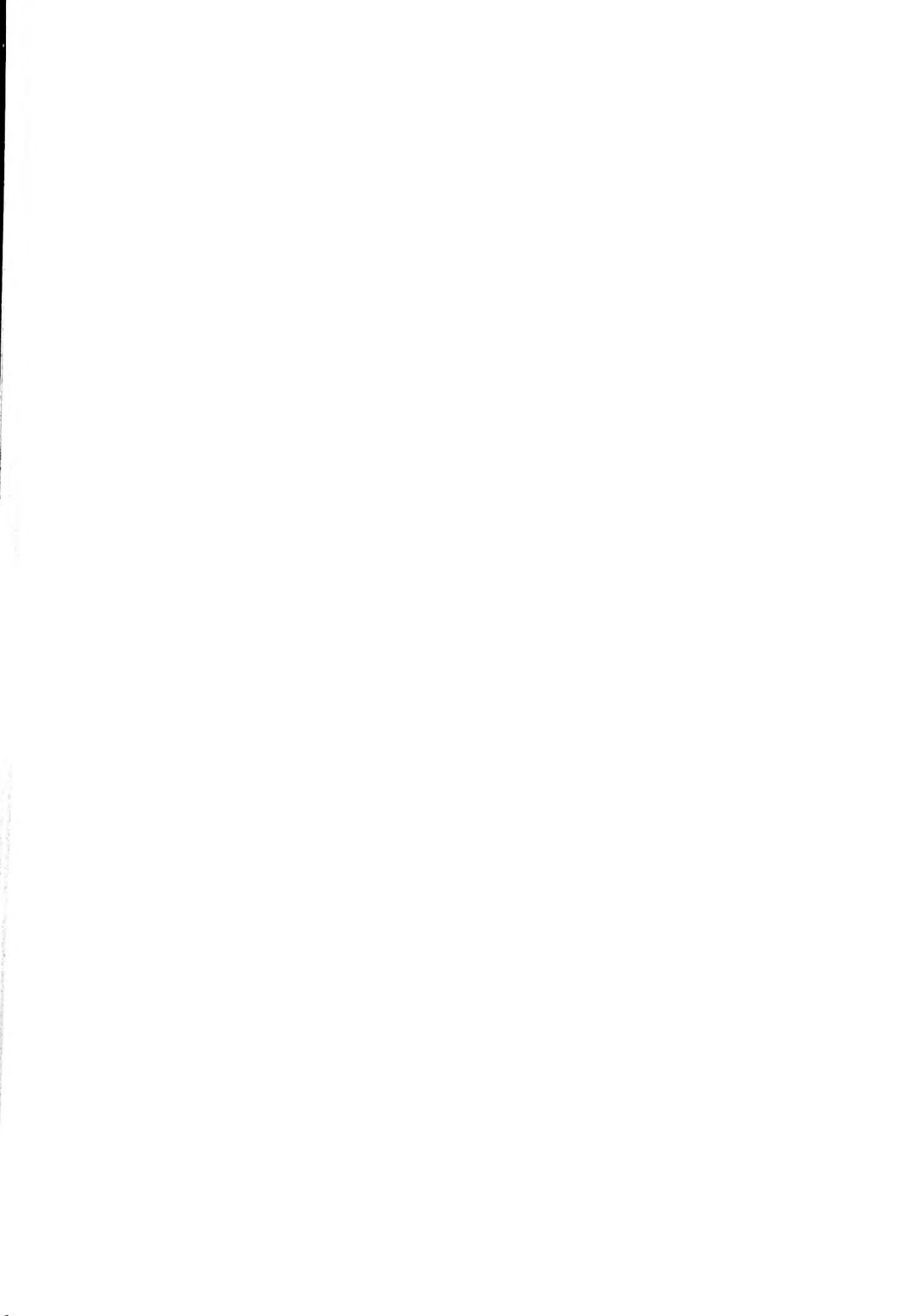
Westerners have destroyed the foundations of ethics with their own hands. Since 50 or 60 years ago, the foundations of ethics have been continually undermined. That is to say, the uncontrolled boost in individual freedoms and letting people be totally free to indulge in whatever they want; these things have destroyed the culture of society from within. This shows that westerners are in a critical situation in terms of culture and personality. In spite of its great wealth, numerous facilities and scientific advances, the American society is suffering from a kind of spiritual poverty and severe ethical deficiency, which is why such crimes and tragedies happen there. This is a consequence of drifting away from spirituality. How can a mother murder her own children because of a passing desire? If pleasure is grounds enough for unlimited freedom, then why are there so many restrictions on drug abuse? Why stop those who want to use drugs? They do not have an answer for this. When the ethical foundations of a society are destroyed, it will be impossible to control anything. Westerners are in such a situation today.

7.3 Spiritual problems

Some people who go after material interests suffer from spiritual and moral problems. This is the result of drifting away from the divine, spiritual and monotheistic worldview. Selfishness, narcissism, creating a pharaoh in one's heart, these are the root of the problems that nations and government officials suffer from. A person may not reveal any pharaonic characteristics, but he may be a pharaoh at heart. Selfishness, narcissism, obstinacy and putting one's interests and desires first are the main source of corruption in life. Therefore, it is necessary to move towards self-purification.

7.4 The effect of moral corruption on the family

The break-up of the family is an inevitable consequence of carnal desires, decadence and moral corruption. And if moral corruption continues, then the consequence will be the same thing that has happened in western countries. This is especially tangible in societies where decadence is more prevalent. In such societies the family has lost its real meaning. For example, if a husband and wife decide to get together and drink tea with their children, then they should make arrangements so that everybody comes home at a particular time. That is to say, there is no warm family environment in such societies. Therefore, the most important issue is that members of a family should love each other and try to build trust.



On Justice

Human nature will not change in the course of time. Humans have always supported justice and felt the need for it throughout history. Justice is not a need that is felt only by a particular group of people belonging to a certain country or nation. Justice has always been a natural need of humanity throughout history. Reliance on justice is the most basic and fundamental principle of a divine movement. It is aimed at continuing what the prophets and the great reformers of history have done throughout history. Justice is what humanity craves, and it has not been administered in the true sense of the word, except under the rule of the great prophets or Imams – such as the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.).

In Islam, the issue of justice is of paramount importance. Justice is one of the indisputable Islamic values that cannot be questioned under any circumstances. Administering justice was one of the goals of the prophets. Similarly, it is one of the goals of the Islamic Republic. Besides attention to God and educating humans, administering justice was always the primary goal of all prophets. Of course, administering justice in the true sense of the word is tightly interwoven with spirituality and rationality. Justice will lose its real meaning if it is separated from rationality and spirituality. Not using one's wisdom and intellect in identifying the manifestations of justice will cause one to be misled and to make mistakes. In this case, one will mistake justice for injustice and vice versa. Therefore, rationality and logic are one of the prerequisites of administering justice.

Similarly, if justice is separated from spirituality, that is, if justice is not accompanied by spirituality, it will again lose its true meaning. Justice will turn into hypocrisy, pretension, and dishonesty if it is not accompanied by spirituality and attention to the moral aspects of life. Such was the case with communist systems whose primary slogan was the administration of justice. Our slogan was justice along with

freedom. But freedom was never included in their slogans. In all countries where communist movements had started in one way or another (revolutions or coups for instance), justice was always the basis of all of their slogans. But the realities were by no means indicative of the existence of justice. It was exactly the opposite. Justice does not mean equality in terms of enjoying the same advantages. Rather, it means equal opportunities and rights for everyone. Everyone should have the same opportunities for progress. Justice does not mean that we should not make any investment or that we should not allow investors to make any investments.

Our goal is to administer justice in society. This is the goal we would like to achieve. Whatever is done to administer justice is valuable. In a society that suffers from inequalities, even if the society is a wealthy one, only a particular group or social class would reap the benefits. But in a society where justice is administered, the existence of wealth is to the benefit of all the people. Of course, it should be noted that justice does not mean "equality" in all cases. It should not be misinterpreted. Justice means everything should be in its right place. This is the meaning of justice. The definition of justice is not what some simple or narrow-minded people have in mind. They might imagine that all the people in a society should enjoy the same amount of benefits. But this is not the case. There are some people who work harder, who are more talented, and who play a more important role in the country's progress. Justice means giving everyone what he or she deserves in a just manner. This is the true meaning of justice. This is the kind of justice that our society needs.

Some people believe that justice means the distribution of poverty. However, this is not the case. Those who speak of administering justice do not mean the distribution of poverty. Rather, they mean the fair distribution of resources. Those who say that administration of justice means the distribution of poverty are actually against the administration of justice. We should seek to create wealth so that wealth is distributed instead of poverty. Creating wealth without administering justice will end in what we currently see in capitalist countries.

In the richest country of the world, the U.S., there are people who die of cold or from heat and hunger. These are not slogans. These are the facts that we know. In a society that suffers from inequalities, even if the society enjoys great amounts of wealth, only a particular group or social class would reap the benefits of that wealth. But in a society where justice is administered, the existence of wealth is to the benefit of all the people. Justice means that everything should be in its appropriate place. In defining justice, factors such as making great efforts, displaying great talent, and playing an integral role in the country's progress should be taken into account.

Justice means acting according to what is right and giving everyone his or her rights. Justice means acting impartially in one's judgments and in protecting the rights of people. Justice means helping the poor and the underprivileged. Justice means that people should be granted their social and human rights in an equal manner and that everyone should be treated equally in regard to carrying out divine laws. In fact justice signifies that a particular group of people should not be granted special privileges. In the absence of justice, the life of human beings would be similar to what can be seen in the worst periods of human history. All the miseries of human communities are due to oppression and lack of justice. If justice was prevalent in the life of all humans, then all humans could live in an enjoyable atmosphere under justice.

The Islamic Republic follows an Islamic model, that is, the model of progress and welfare accompanied by justice, brotherhood, and kindness in an effort to bridge the gap between the poor and the wealthy in society. Progress in such a society is accompanied by spirituality and this is what Islam seeks to achieve. Of course, it is rather easy to speak of justice, but justice is a demand that cannot be easily satisfied. It requires long-term planning. We need to start such planning and develop a perspective that is focused on justice. In an Islamic government, justice forms the basis of all decisions in executive sectors, and all officials in an Islamic government, from the honorable MPs to different officials in executive sectors--especially experts and those in charge of policy making,

to judges and those active in the judiciary, should sincerely and in a determined manner seek to administer justice in society. Justice should be forcefully demanded by all the people and youth, so that all officials are made to pay attention to the issue of justice, even if it is against their will. Demanding justice means that justice should be the dominant dialogue among the youth and the students. They should demand justice and demand its administration of all officials. By Allah's favor, the 4th decade of the Islamic Revolution should be the decade of progress and justice. This means making considerable progress and administering justice in a tangible manner in society. All plans should be focused on the fulfillment of this goal. And this is what makes our nation and country immune to all dangers.

On Human Rights

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In the name of the Most High: The issue of human rights in Islam is one of the most fundamental human issues and also one of the most sensitive and controversial ones. During recent decades, this problem was more political than either ethical or legal. Although the influence of political motives, rivalries, and considerations have made the correct formulation of this problem difficult, this should not prevent thinkers and genuine humanists from probing into this problem and ultimately reaching a conclusion.

In the West, although the issue of human rights was raised by the thinkers of the post-Renaissance period, it is only in the last two hundred years or so that it has become an issue of prominence among the political and social issues of Western society and an issue of fundamental significance. Perhaps, when we examine the causes of many social changes and political upheavals, we will find the marks of its presence and its principal ideals. During the last decades this emphasis has reached its climax in the West. With the formation of the United Nation after the Second World War and the subsequent drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a concrete model came into existence that can serve as a criterion and basis for our judgment and analysis of the ideals voiced in this regard during the last two hundred years and especially in the last few decades.

We Muslims, of course, know very well that the Western world and Western civilization have paid attention to this matter in recent centuries. But Islam has dealt with human rights from various points of view from many centuries ago. The idea of human rights as a fundamental principle can be seen to underlie all Islamic teachings. And this does not need any elaboration for a Muslim audience. The verses of the Quran and the traditions handed down from the Prophet

(SA) and the Imams of his Household (AS), all emphasize the fundamental rights of man, something which has started to attract attention in recent years. This is considered an obvious fact among Muslims, and there is no need for scholars to be reminded about this fact. However, I would like to say, that today it is a major responsibility for the Islamic community to make this reality known to the world, and not to allow those essential teachings of Islam to be lost in the storm of political clamor and propaganda.

There are some questions that can be raised in this regard, and to answer them is my principal aim today. Of course, in the course of the conference, you scholars will carry on useful and profound discussions on various aspects of human rights, which will themselves serve as a source of information for the Muslim world and enlighten it about the views of Islam in this regard.

1. The UN: Impotent and Ineffectual

The first question is whether the efforts made during the decades since the Second World War in the name of human rights have been successful or not. Have the addresses, the assemblies and the sessions held in the United Nations, and the claims made regarding human rights succeeded in bringing mankind or at least a major portion of deprived humanity closer to its genuine rights? The answer to this question is not so difficult, since an observation of the present conditions is enough to prove that these attempts have not been successful until now. A glance at the conditions of the underdeveloped societies of the world, who form the major part of the human population, is sufficient to reveal the fact that not only the major part of humanity have not achieved their true rights during the last fifty years, but on the contrary methods for encroaching upon the rights of the deprived nations have become ever more sophisticated and complex and more difficult to remedy. We cannot accept the claims made by those who claim to be champions of human rights, while the bitter realities of the African and Asian nations and the millions of hungry human

beings are before our eyes, and while we observe constant violations of the rights of many nations.

Those who have been outspoken in advocating human rights during the last forty years have themselves taken away the most fundamental of human rights from the people of the Third World countries. It is with their support that certain governments and regimes that deny people their most basic rights have managed to survive. None of the dictators of today's world or the despots of the last fifty years in Asia, Africa and Latin America could have established and preserved their dictatorships on their own without relying upon the big powers. It is exactly these big powers that have coined most of the slogans concerning human rights. It is they who have brought the U.N. Organization into being, and even today the U.N is at their service.

The economic poverty, hunger and loss of life in several countries of the world are of course the result of intervention, repression, usurpation on the part of the big powers. Who has caused Africa, a continent of vast resources, to undergo these present afflictions? Who has kept the people of Bangladesh and India for years and years under exploitation, and, despite their natural resources and great potentialities, has brought them to the point that today we hear of people dying of hunger in those countries? Who has plundered the wealth and resources of the Third World countries, and has brought about hunger, poverty and misfortune for these nations, while procuring sophisticated technologies and immense wealth for themselves? We see that the organizers of the United Nations and the principal drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and those who even today shamelessly claim to be the supporters of this declaration are the real causes of those misfortunes. Otherwise there is no reason why Africa, a continent of exuberance and bounty, Latin America with its natural wealth, great India, and many other Third World countries should have lagged behind and remained backward in spite of sufficient manpower and natural resources.

Today, the system of political domination of capital and power prevails in the world, and there is no doubt that this

system is controlled and steered by the same people who were the fathers of the Declaration of Human Rights. We see the nations of the world being crushed and struggling helplessly under the wheel of their capital, power and technology. The U.N. is the most outstanding product of the efforts made for human rights, yet what has it done in the past for the nations of the world and what is it doing today? What active role could the U.N. play in solving the basic problems of nations and in relieving them from the calamities that are befalling them? In what instance did the U.N. emerge as a deliverer of the oppressed from the oppressor? At what point could the U.N. persuade the tyrannical big powers to refrain from making unjust demands? The U.N. has even lagged behind most of the nations in this regard.

Today, despite all those claims, we are witness to the apartheid regime in South Africa and to many instances of racism and racial discrimination in the advanced countries themselves. Therefore, it is clear that the U.N., despite its being the most outstanding example of the endeavor for human rights, has done nothing in this regard. It has intervened in international issues in the role of a preacher or priest. The Security Council is one of the principal organs of the U.N. and functions as the main decision-making body in which the big powers have the right of veto. That is, every decision that is made in the U.N. and in the Security Council against the real agents who handicap the nations, could be vetoed by the same agents themselves, that is, the big powers. The United Nations and its organs, agencies and organizations, whether they are cultural, economic or technical, are under the influence and domination of the big powers. U.S. pressures even hit cultural agencies like U.N.E.S.C.O. and others that are known to everyone. You witnessed how the U.S. subjected U.N.E.S.C.O. to pressures during these last two years just because the chief of U.N.E.S.C.O. was a Muslim who desired to maintain his own independence as well as that of the agency. Consequently, we feel that the U.N., as the most significant outcome of the endeavor for human rights, has proved to be an ineffectual and impotent element. It was created as a consolation for nations

but is practically useless. Because of the interference on the part of the big powers, it functions as their vassal. We do not, of course, reject the U.N. We believe that this organization ought to exist, and it must be reformed. We ourselves belong to it as a member. However, what I mean to say is that after all those efforts, after all that clamor and the hopes that were attached to this organization, one can see how inadequate and ineffectual this organization has remained in securing human rights in the world today. Hence, the answer to the first question has become clear. We can say that the efforts made for establishing human rights and the claims made in the name of human rights throughout the last several centuries and especially during the last few decades did not bear any fruit. They have failed to secure human rights.

2. Efforts in Pursuit of Human Rights Not Sincere

The second question is whether, basically, these efforts had any sincerity? This question is, of course, historical in nature and may not have much practical value. Hence, I do not intend to discuss it at length. It suffices to mention here that, in our view, these efforts were not sincere. It is true that there were philosophers, thinkers and social reformers among the exponents of human rights, but politicians dominated the arena. Even the efforts of those thinkers and reformers were taken into the service of politicians. If in the annals of history, thinkers, sages, apostles of God, mystics and men were seen to raise the cry for the rights of man, today when we see politicians and statesmen raise this cry vociferously, we are justified in seriously doubting their sincerity.

Look around and see who those who plead the case of human rights are. The ex-president of the U.S. [Jimmy Carter] projected himself as a defender of human rights during his election campaign and won the election because of it. In the beginning, from some of the speeches he made and steps that he took, it appeared that he was serious in his intention. But we have seen that ultimately he stood by the cruelest, the most barbaric and tyrannical of rulers, and the most adamant

opponents of human rights in this region. He supported the Shah and the tyrants of occupied Palestine and other infamous dictatorships of our days.

Even now those who plead the case of human rights, the statesmen and politicians who vociferously utter their support for human rights in conferences and international forums, are no more sincere than their former counterparts. We do not find any signs of sincerity in their efforts. The aim of those who drafted the Declaration of Human Rights, with the U.S.A. at the forefront, was to extend their domination and hegemony over the world of that time. Their problem was not to safeguard the rights of men, the kind of rights that they had violated during the war. They are the people who have wiped out tens of thousands of human beings by an atomic bomb. They are the same persons who, in order to fight a war which had nothing to do with the Asian and African nations, had recruited the majority of soldiers from India, Algeria and other African and non-European countries. We do not believe that Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin and their like had the smallest consideration for human rights in the true sense of the word nor were they sincere in forming the United Nations and drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Accordingly, the answer to the second question is also clear: no, we do not believe that the efforts made by the politicians and the staunchest advocates of human rights were sincere at all.

3. The Biggest Evil of Humanity: Acceptance of the Culture of Dominance

The third question, the most basic of all, is: what was the reason for the failure of these attempts? This is the point to which more attention should be paid, and I shall discuss it briefly here. I believe it is the most basic point, because whatever has been presented in the name of human rights is done within the framework of a defective and crooked system, a system of dominance that is repressive and tyrannical.

Those who have created the U.N. and have drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and those who most vehemently and vociferously plead for it today, the majority of whom are statesmen and politicians, regrettably believe in the system of dominance and have accepted it. The system of dominance means that a group of people dominates and should dominate another group. The system of dominance is backed by a culture of dominance.

Today the world is divided into two groups: one is the group that dominates and the other is the group that is dominated. Both groups have accepted the system of dominance, and the big powers believe that this system should be maintained. Even those who are dominated have accepted the system of dominance and have consented to its continuity. This is the biggest flaw in the existing world situation. Those who do not accept the system of dominance are those individuals or groups who are not satisfied with the social order in their countries or with the social and political state of world affairs, and rise in revolt against this system.

The revolutionary groups who revolt against the global status quo or revolutionary governments are very few in number and are constantly subjected to pressures and victimized. The most illustrative example of this is the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has rejected domination in all its forms, and has not accepted anybody's domination. In this respect the East as well as the West are the same for us. When making decisions it does not give any priority to the powerful or the rich. The whole world is witness to the kinds of pressures Iran had to face during the period of the first eight years after the Islamic Republic of Iran was established. It was subjected to political, military and economic pressures, and the pressures of worldwide propaganda launched against it. The cause of such pressures is clear. It was all done because the Islamic Republic has taken a clear and independent stand against the system of dominance.

If some progressive governments have resisted Western and U.S. domination, in the majority of cases, there were observable signs of acceptance of and surrender to

Eastern domination. Of course, all of them are not the same in this regard. Some of them have completely surrendered themselves to the Eastern bloc and the U.S.S.R. while some others show signs of independence in some cases. But if there is a government and a society that has never yielded to any pressures, it is the Islamic Republic, which has totally rejected the system of dominance.

Wherever in the world there is any pressure, high-handedness and unjust demands made upon a certain nation by a big power in the world, we have made our stand clear and have openly and bluntly expressed our definite views without any reservations. But the majority of the world's nations have accepted this system. You can see that unfortunately the governments of the same countries that are subject to domination do not have the moral courage and guts to resist and oppose the domination of the big powers and fight them, whereas in our view it is quite possible. We believe that had the poor countries that have been under domination, and in spite of their resources have been forced to fulfill the unjust demands made by the big powers, wished to stand against them, they could have done so. No miracle is needed. It is sufficient that the governments should rely upon their own people.

Unfortunately, the weakness of will to resist, and more than weakness, the treachery on the part of some heads of states, in some cases, did not allow them to rise against the system of dominance. This system of dominance prevails over the world economy, culture, international relations and international rights. Naturally the issue of human rights has been posed within the framework of this system of dominance and developed in the background of this system and its outlook. The very persons who strive to secure freedom, opportunities and means of welfare for their citizens in European countries, in the name of human rights, bomb and kill human beings in other countries by the thousands. What does it mean? Does it mean anything other than the fact that in view of the culture of domination which prevails over the world, human beings are divided into two categories: the human beings whose rights

are to be defended, and the human beings who have no rights whatsoever and it is permissible to kill, destroy, enslave and subjugate them and to seize their belongings? This system is prevalent all over the world and the conception of human rights is also the product of such a culture.

This is the framework of the system of rights in the world of today. Within this cultural and legal framework, the superpowers constantly widen the gap between the weaker nations and themselves, and exert more and more pressure on them. The greater the rate of advancement in technology, the more the weaker countries and nations are threatened and subjected to mounting pressures. No one asks the big powers today what right they have to put greater pressure on other countries and nations than ever before, with their greater advancement in technology and industrialization. Today the satellites launched into space by the big powers are moving in their orbits around the globe, gathering the smallest details and probing into the secrets of other countries. Why? What gives them the right to do that?

Today, most of the communications between people on the global level, especially those between statesmen and heads of states, and political and scientific communications are accessible to those who possess sophisticated technology. Why? Does anyone ask them this question? Does anyone raise any objection? Since the U.S. has launched those satellites and possesses the means of gathering and benefiting from intelligence, everyone assumes that it has the right to obtain that information. Does the eavesdropping on the communications between the world's people not amount to a violation of their rights? Does anyone put this question to the U.S., U.S.S.R., U.K., France and Germany? When this question is raised, will anyone affirm that such a question should be raised? No, everyone says to himself: they are strong, so they can do it. They are capable of doing it, so they must use the opportunity. Today the problem of the atomic bomb and the use of nuclear weapons is an issue all over the world.

The superpowers themselves raise it because they are afraid of each other. They wrangle over it and each tries to

dupe the other by limiting the nuclear arsenals of its rival while equipping itself with more and more weapons. But, have the smaller countries ever thought of opposing the manufacturers of nuclear bombs, by declaring that unless these bombs are destroyed and defused and peace of mind is restored to humanity, which is exposed to the nuclear threat every moment, they shall not have any relations with them, nor any trade, nor any cooperation in any matter? Have the Third World countries, the non-aligned nations and other countries of the world ever thought of making use of some kind of leverage against the race for nuclear arms? No. If you suggest this idea to them, they will say that it is an advanced technology, they possess it; they can, and so they must produce such weapons.

It means that they have accepted the logic of dominance. Both the oppressor states as well as the oppressed nations have equally accepted this absence of balance in the present world. The culture of dominance has been imposed on their minds. When we denounce the East and the West in international forums because of their acts, we clearly perceive the astonishment of the heads of states and representatives of dominated countries. They consider it something odd and rash, whereas it is a natural stand by an independent nation. All the nations and states should behave in a similar manner, but they do not. The conclusion that we draw is that today the prevalence of the culture of dominance has become the biggest evil. It is something that has been greatly detrimental for the weaker nations, and has encouraged the big powers to violate human rights.

All these violations of human rights are easily tolerated whether it is U.S. aggression against Grenada, or the massacre of defenseless Lebanese civilians by the U.S. support of Israel, or the ruthless suppression of the black population, who are the real masters of the land, by the government of South Africa, which is backed by the U.S. and some European governments. But when a frustrated individual, infuriated by this state of affairs in some corner of the world does something, if an explosion takes place or something happens, it is deplored as an act of terrorism. But the U.S. aggression against Libya, the

bombardment of the homes of the president of a country and the encroaching upon its territory, is not condemned by the world. Whenever there is a mention of terrorism, usually the first thing that comes to the minds of people is some desperate act of a youth, a victim of oppression fed up with life from Palestine or Lebanon, or some African or Latin American country, rather than the acts of such big powers as the U.S., the U.K., and others. This is nothing but the result of the culture of dominance, the culture that unfortunately dominates human mentality all over the world.

In the culture of dominance, words also acquire peculiar connotations that suit the system of dominance. For instance, 'terrorism' is defined in such a way that the U.S. aggression against Libya, or its intimidation of Nicaragua or the invasion of Grenada or other examples do not come under the definition of 'terrorism.' This is a big flaw in the present state of affairs. Therefore, the attempts made in the name of human rights, even on behalf of those who are sincere and earnest, fail because of the nature of the framework within which they want to declare the rights of human beings; this framework is impossible. This framework is to be broken and the system of dominance to be condemned. States, nations and countries should resolutely reject the unfair and unjust domination of the big powers so that human rights may be understood, pursued and restored.

4. The Solution: Return to Islam

Lastly, the fourth question: what is the remedy? In our view, the answer is to return to Islam and take recourse in Divine revelation. This is a prescription equally valid for Muslims as well as for non-Muslims. For this, the Islamic societies do not have to wait for anything. Return to Islam, revival of the Quran and of the Islamic mode of thinking in society, recourse to Islamic sources (the Quran and the Sunnah) in legal matters: these are the things that will enable us to understand the meaning of human rights and help us to identify those rights and guide us in our struggle to secure them. For the purpose

of securing human rights, it is necessary, once and for all, to give up giving advice and lecturing, since they are of no use. The Quran says: "Take by force that which we have given you." [2:63]. God Almighty has granted these rights to mankind, and they should secure these rights by force. The Islamic nations should resist the unjust demands and dominance of the big powers by relying upon the Islamic ideology. These are not the words of an idealist who speaks about Islamic issues and Islamic ideals from the corner of a theological seminary. These are the utterances of a revolution that has experienced realities.

Our revolution is an experience that is available for all nations to study. I do not say that we have solved all our problems. We have not. There is no doubt that a great many problems have been created for us because of the Revolution and because of its Islamic character. But we have solved the problem of dominance. Today the Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic can claim that they have rid themselves of all domination by foreign powers and that they can decide for themselves. Of course, when a nation tries to do away with all forms of dependence, it has a long path to tread. Foreign relations, if they are freed from domination, bullying, and unjust demands, are something natural and tolerable. It is quite obvious that our Revolution and the Islamic Republic inherited the legacy of a decadent society, a shattered economy, and a degenerate culture.

What was handed down to the Revolution by the rulers of the past centuries, especially of the last fifty or sixty years, was an Iran beleaguered from all sides. It is not to be expected that the Revolution will be able to lead this dissipated heritage in a short time to the heights of cultural, ethical and economic achievement and scientific and industrial advancement. We do not make such claims, but, of course, we do anticipate a good future. We believe that it is possible for a nation to reach a high level of material advancement only through independence and self-reliance and by using its manpower and material resources. But what we positively claim today is that the Islamic Republic is not under any political pressure or domination by any power whatsoever. Political pressures do not influence it to change

its course or alter its decisions. It does not change its path or its momentum on account of any consideration for any superpower. This means that we have freed ourselves and our people from domination by the big powers.

This is an experience, which, we believe, underlines the significance of the most basic and precious of human rights in Islam: the right to live, the right to be free, the right to benefit from justice, the right to welfare, and so on. These and other such fundamental rights can be secured in an Islamic society. They can be derived from Islamic sources and Islam has incorporated them in its commands to Muslims and drawn man's attention towards them, long before Western thinkers gave thought to these rights and values. It is essential to return to Islam.

Muslim thinkers are charged with the responsibility of thoroughly examining and studying the subject of human rights or rather the general structure of the Islamic legal system. This is also the mission of the present conference, which, I hope, will be a new step taken in this direction, and, God willing, this work will continue. The nations of the world can benefit from the sublime outlook of Islam in this regard in coming closer to securing these rights.

The Islamic governments should of course help their peoples in securing their rights, but on the condition that they should have no reservations in regard to the big powers. Unfortunately, today we do not see such a state of affairs. Most of the regimes governing Islamic countries are under the influence of the big powers. Most of them are dominated by the West and are under U.S. influence. Therefore, their actions and decisions comply neither with the Islamic principles, nor with the needs of Muslim nations.

A ready example in this regard is the conference held recently in Kuwait. You have seen in this conference, instead of considering the basic problems of Muslims, what kinds of problems were discussed and what kind of resolution was passed. It was by no means compatible with an Islamic approach to the problem. Instead of rejecting Iraq's aggression against a Muslim country and its waging of a war against an Islamic

revolution, they should have denounced it and expelled it from the conference. Instead of revealing the part played by the imperialist powers in igniting the flames of this imposed war, they came out with a hollow and insipid demand for peace, and even expressed their satisfaction for Iraq's positive response to the call for peace. They did it without going into the core of the problem, without appreciating the fact that a nation's resolve to defend its own rights is something commendable, and without recognizing that the willingness of a government and a regime to be influenced by the pressure of imperialist powers in creating obstacles in the path of a revolution is something to be condemned.

Of course, these resolutions, decisions and opinions are totally invalid and of no weight, as they are remote from Islamic principles and values. Accordingly, there is no nation or country in the world that looks forward to knowing what step the Islamic Conference takes in Kuwait so as to welcome it or be disappointed with it. It means that these decisions and resolutions are so far removed from reality, so alien to basic Islamic criteria and the aspirations of nations that they remain completely indifferent to these. You will not find a single country in the world whose people should be waiting eagerly to know what the Islamic Conference has to say, so that its resolution promises a sense of obligation or the pleasure of receiving some good news. What is the reason? Why should a gathering of forty-six Islamic states organized on the highest level of heads of states and leaders be so ineffectual and so devoid of consequence and content? It is because of the unfortunate fact that most of these regimes are under the influence of the big powers.

As long as this domination of the big powers and the awe and fear of them remain in the hearts of the Muslim nations, the affairs of these nations will be in disarray. If we wish to deliver the Muslim world from its present-day disarray and confusion, the first thing that is to be done is to drive this fear and awe away from their hearts, as God Almighty has said: "...So fear not mankind, but fear Me...." They should not be afraid of anyone except God. If this happens, the condition of

the Islamic nations will move towards betterment.

I conclude my speech with the hope that, God willing, this Islamic Thought Conference, during the few days that it will hold its sessions, will be able to make a significant contribution towards the understanding of the Islamic truths regarding human rights. Besides, the exchange of opinions between the Iranian and the non-Iranian brothers will help the communication of the experience of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic and their better understanding by the non-Iranian brothers. It will provide them the opportunity to study that experience, so that other nations may view the Revolution brought about by their brethren in Iran as a model and as a new path that can be trodden.

Greetings be upon you and Allah's mercy and blessings.

Essays on Global Concerns on
History, Economics, and
Current Challenges to the
Youth of the World

Monotheism and Its World View

1.0 Monotheism and the worldview behind it

1.1 Idiomatic meaning of monotheism

According to Qur`anic culture and teachings, monotheism is the belief that the Exalted One, being a unity, has created the world and man and that He is controlling creation, the laws of nature and the daily lives of human beings.

Monotheism is the belief that the complex, amazing and orderly system of creation, including galaxies, nebulae, great celestial black holes, innumerable planets and millions of planetary systems as well as tiny cells that make up living creatures and tiny chemical combinations that make up matter, is the result of a higher thought, wisdom and power and that it was not an accident that gave rise to this system. There is so much order in this great, diverse and complex system that thousands of laws have been extracted so far. This is because when there is inviolable order, it is possible to extract absolute natural laws from that order. This belief is acceptable to any healthy mind and any wise and thinking person who does not make impulsive decisions or prejudgments. This higher thought and wisdom and this great, endless and indescribable power that has given rise to this amazing and complex system is not an idol built by man, a limited human being who claims to be God or a legendary or mythical character. Rather, it is the Powerful and Eternal One, referred to as "God" in different faiths, whose characteristics are inferred from His signs. Therefore, He is the One whose existence can explain the power, will and organization behind this great and complex structure. He is also the One whose existence can prove that the Unique and Indescribable Designer is not a mortal being or one of the worthless things that is built by man. "He is Allah, besides Whom there is no god: The King, the Holy, the Giver of peace, the Granter of security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of every greatness. Glory

be to Allah from what they set up (with Him).”

Monotheism means the freedom of man from worshipping and obeying anything and anybody except God. It means breaking free from the domination of human systems. It means breaking the spell of fear of satanic and material powers. It means relying on the endless powers that God has bestowed on human beings requiring them to make use of these powers as an inviolable obligation. It means having faith in the divine promise of victory for the oppressed against oppressors and arrogant powers, on condition that they rise up, fight and resist. It means relying on God's mercy and not fearing the possibility of defeat. It means courting the hardships and dangers that lie in the way of divine promises and threaten human beings. It means considering hardships as divine challenges and remaining hopeful about the definite ultimate victory. It means setting one's sights on the higher goal, namely, saving human societies from all kinds of oppression, discrimination, ignorance and polytheism, and seeking compensation from Allah the Exalted for the individual failures suffered on the path of God. In summary, monotheism means being connected to the endless ocean of divine power and wisdom and rushing towards the higher goal with hope and without anxiety. All the dignity and glory that have been promised for human beings will only be achieved in the presence of this faith and this clear and deep understanding of monotheism. In the absence of an appropriate understanding of monotheism and in the absence of ideological and practical commitment to monotheism, none of the divine promises for human beings will be fulfilled.

1.2 Reasons for the existence of God

One of the foundations of self-knowledge, self-knowledge in the sense of further knowledge of God, is that one should become familiar with one's self and weaknesses and with one's heartfelt love and needs. There is something in the hearts of people that points to the existence of God. What is it? It is the need to search for God, divine love and divine attraction. This is in the hearts of all of us. Even materialistic people have this feeling. But unaware people do not know what it is.

The fact that people run after attachment, affection and attraction is rooted in attraction to God, but this feeling is not strong enough in the hearts of unaware and ignorant people, and they do not understand this point.

1.3 The position of wisdom in theology

Monotheism is not limited to acknowledging the existence of the Almighty One. This is only the surface of monotheism. Deep monotheism is a boundless ocean in which God's saints were immersed. Monotheism is a very great realm. But even in this great realm Muslims, faithful people and monotheists have been demanded to move forward, relying on wisdom, acumen and thinking. Wisdom and thinking can indeed help people move forward. Of course in different stages wisdom is equipped and fed with the light of the revelations, knowledge and the teachings of God's saints. However, it is wisdom that moves forward. One will not get anywhere in the absence of wisdom.

1.4 The essential foundation of Islam

Whatever hardships and misfortunes that may plague the lives of Muslims and Muslim nations are the result of a failure to live in the shade of monotheism. Monotheism is not just a mental concept. It is a real-world entity and a set of guidelines for life. It tells Muslims how to behave towards friends and enemies, how to behave in society and how to live. Some people think that having faith in monotheism is only related to the afterlife. This is why having faith in monotheism is the factor upon which this world and this worldly life are based.

The more Muslims move towards monotheism and the worship of God, the more liberated they will be from different kinds of *tāghūt*, i.e., government that is not sanctioned by God. Serving God is not consistent with serving others.

1.5 Monotheism in the Islamic Worldview

All schools of thought have a particular view, interpretation and perception of the world. This particular way of viewing

the world and its quality is called a world-view. Monotheism is part of the Islamic world-view. It is part of the Islamic ideology. Monotheism is like the soul of all Islamic rules. It is like the invisible air that fills all parts of the structure that is known as Islam. It is like clean and fresh blood that circulates in the veins of Islam or religion. This blood can be found in all the tiny veins of Islam. You cannot find one single Islamic rule that is not imbued with monotheism in one way or another.

Islam believes that every element of the world, from tiny to big creatures and from the lowest levels of creation to the most dignified, powerful and thinking creatures called human beings, has been created by a very great power. There is a Truth that is beyond what people can see, beyond what the keen eyes of experimental sciences can observe and beyond all phenomena that are available to human senses. This Truth is superior, higher and more dignified than all the phenomena of the world, and all the phenomena in the world are the result of the power of this Truth. This superior Power is called "God" or "Allah." Therefore, the world is a reality that is not independent. It has not created itself. It is not the result of self-generation. Rather, a powerful hand has created these different phenomena, and the more advanced human knowledge becomes, the more these phenomena are manifested. The life of this Power has not been bestowed on It, and Its knowledge has not been learnt. This Power has full control over the world. What is the relationship between this Power and the elements of the world?

When the elements of the world are created, do they continue their existence the way a baby does? This is not the case. The elements of the world depend on this Power for every moment of their existence. And all creatures are created by this Power and are Its servants. This Power can control everything. It has created everything according to a particular order. It has created everything according to accurate laws of nature, and these laws are being discovered today by science.

In the Islamic world-view, monotheism means that the world has a Creator. In other words, the world has a pure and sublime soul. The world has a Creator, and all elements of this

world are the servants of that Creator, and the Creator has full control over these elements.

1.6 The position of creatures in the monotheistic ideology of Islam

The pure monotheistic ideology of Islam says that all creatures and objects have been created by a powerful hand. Everything and everybody are the servants of that Power. They are controlled by that Power. They must obey that Power. Nobody is allowed to bow to anyone except that Power, and nobody is allowed to force other people to bow to them. Just as people are not allowed to force other people to prostrate themselves before them, they are not allowed to prostrate themselves before other people. This is because in both cases their actions are against the truth.

1.7 Creation from the perspective of a monotheist

When a person becomes a Muslim, everything becomes a means to achieve a vast world, not the world after death, but the world of one's own thought and ideology, which is as vast as God. Everything is a means to enable human beings to gain God's satisfaction. Worldly life, wealth, wellbeing and love lose their value for monotheists. They become valuable only when they can serve a divine cause. But when this love, wealth, position, life, child and honor cannot help a monotheist to fulfill his obligations or serve the cause of God, then they lose all their value.

1.8 Man in the Islamic world-view

In the Islamic world-view, man is considered to enjoy numerous talents. From an Islamic perspective, man can make indefinite progress in the arena of knowledge and unveiling the secrets of creation. He can make indefinite progress in passing through spiritual stages. He can go further than angels. He can reach the peaks of perfection in terms of different capabilities. If he worships God and obeys Him, these paths will be opened up in front of him. And if he obeys other people instead of

God, his wings will be clipped, and he will no longer be able to fly. In all fields of knowledge, monotheism appears on the path of people and they become familiar with it. The early Muslims who developed a tendency towards monotheism in spite of the prevalent ignorance and polytheism of that era gained so much freedom that the doors of knowledge were opened up for them. They took the lead and the rest of humanity followed them into the realm of knowledge. Today the world and humanity owe their knowledge to Islam and to the monotheism of the early Muslims who were first to step into the realm of knowledge.

1.9 The secret behind the survival of monotheistic thought

There were many people throughout history who were opposed to the rule of God and monotheism on earth. How did the divine prophets manage to overcome their enemies throughout history? How did the Children of Israel [Israelites] manage to rule the entire world in spite of all the pressure that was exerted on Moses, Shu'aib, Joshua and Aaron? How did the Prophet of Islam (s.w.a.), who was fighting single-handedly against the ignorant people of his time, manage to establish a government in Medina? How did he manage to spread monotheism to the entire world and create a new movement in history through his government? How did the Islamic Revolution succeed in spite of the opposition of the east and the west? How did the Islamic Revolution succeed in spite of the fact that it did not have a single supporter other than peoples in the entire material world? The secret behind the survival of monotheistic thought throughout history and the victory of Iran's Islamic Revolution is that there are some people among God's servants who are prepared to lay down their lives for the sake of this goal and this ideal. It is all due to the spirit of seeking martyrdom. If it had not been for the spirit of seeking martyrdom and if it had not been for the lives laid down for a lofty goal, neither the Islamic Revolution nor the Prophet of Islam (s.w.a.) would have achieved victory. Monotheism would not have achieved any success throughout history. This is why Allah the Exalted has set a precondition

for all divine prophets and all divine faiths: "Surely Allah has bought of the believers their lives and their property for this, that they shall have the garden" [The Holy Quran, 9: 111]. It is the spirit of seeking martyrdom that helps nations achieve victory.

2.0 People who deny monotheism

2.1 Degeneration of humanity

Polytheism is the biggest sin that an individual or society can commit. Allah the Exalted forgives all sins except polytheism. "Surely Allah does not forgive that any partner should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases" [The Holy Quran, 4: 48]. In spite of the seriousness and magnitude of polytheism, there are many people in the world who commit this sin. This is due to the fact that, unlike many other kinds of sins, various forms of this sin are not always familiar to people. Therefore, polytheism has been divided into two categories in Islamic narrations: manifest and hidden. As a result, polytheism can be found in both ignorant and Islamic communities.

2.2 Polytheism in ignorant communities

In ignorant communities, everything is polytheistic. Every action of the people is contaminated with polytheism in such communities. This is because ignorant and non-Islamic communities are ruled by those who steer the movement of those communities towards non-divine entities. And this is why the rulers and all the people who follow them are in fact moving towards fire and annihilation.

In a polytheistic society, whenever a discussion is started about the relationship between the people and the Power that dominates the world, it naturally leads to discord among the people of that society; each of them goes after a particular god. A society that is built on the foundations of polytheism creates an unbridgeable gap and an impenetrable wall between its people.

2.3 Polytheism in Islamic communities

There may be polytheism in Islamic societies even if they are ruled by agents of God. The first instance of polytheism in an Islamic society, or a society that wants to be Islamic, appears when the officials of that society are prepared to approve and implement non-divine rules due to certain considerations or due to indifference or a pessimistic attitude towards the future, Islam and Muslims. This is an instance of polytheism, an instance of great polytheism. When the people who rule a Muslim society, which has been established in the name of Islam, are prepared to give up God's rules for their interests, an instance of polytheism appears in that society: "They purchase not a trifling gain at the price of the revelations of Allah" [The Holy Quran, 3: 199]. In spite of being populated by Muslims, this society is dominated by an instance of acute polytheism.

2.4 The necessity of identifying the meaning of polytheism

Imam Sajjad (a.s.) said: "The caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty let the people achieve faith, but they did not let them acquire knowledge of polytheism. This was because they wanted to prevent the people from recognizing polytheism in case they [the Umayyads] decided to promote it among the people." The Umayyad caliphs used to let religious scholars and the Infallible Imams (a.s.) speak about daily prayers, the *hajj*, *zakāt*, fasting, worship and the divine rules about these things. They used to provide them with the freedom to speak to the people about monotheism and prophethood, but they did not let anybody teach the people anything about the meaning of polytheism and its instances and manifestations. This was because if the people had learnt these things, they would have realized immediately that their rulers were polytheists. They would have realized that the rulers of the Umayyad dynasty were guiding them towards polytheism. They would have realized immediately that the rulers of the Umayyad dynasty were not sanctioned by God and that they were fighting against Him. They would have realized immediately that if they obeyed them, they would in fact become polytheists. This was why

they did not let the people become familiar with the teachings related to polytheism.

2.5 Factors that cause polytheism

Allamah Majlesi (r.a.) says in the 44th volume of *Biḥār al-Anwār*, “On the surface, the Quranic verses about polytheism are related to idols. But deeper meanings and interpretations point to oppressive rulers, those who called themselves caliphs in the name of righteousness and ruled Islamic communities. Next to the Infallible Imams (a.s.), these oppressive rulers claimed that they had a right to rule Muslim communities.” Their claim was an instance of polytheism because the Infallible Imams (a.s.) were the representatives of God on earth, and they used to speak the words of God. Because the rulers considered themselves as God’s representatives and claimed that they had a right to be an Imam, they were in fact idols and *ṭāghūt*. And everybody who obeys such people has in fact become a polytheist.

2.6 Rejecting claims of being children of God

What is bestowed on the people by the Holy Quran as religious beliefs is what plays a role in fulfilling divine goals. And what is rejected as corrupt beliefs is what plays a role in the corruption of society. Rejection of corrupt beliefs means rejecting an avenue of corruption in society. According to *sūra Yūnus*, āyah 68: “They say: Allah has taken a son (to Himself).” Christians, Jews and polytheists of Quraysh, Arabia and other places would say that Allah the Exalted had chosen a child for Himself. Some people would say that God had a daughter. Others would say that He had a son. Yet others would say that He had both a son and a daughter. Some people would say that God had only one child. Others would say that He had an infinite number of children. These claims meant that there was somebody in the world who was not God’s servant, but His child. Jews used to call Prophet Aziz “Aziz ibn Allah,” which meant that they believed Prophet Aziz to be the son of God. They wanted to say that all creatures were God’s servants, but

Prophet Aziz was not. They claimed that Prophet Aziz was His son. Christians used to say the same thing about Christ. Similarly, the polytheists of Arabia used to say that Lāt, Manāt and 'Uzzà were the daughters of God. The polytheists of Rome and Greece also attributed many children to God. All of them believed in this. That is to say, they divided creation into three camps: The camp of God, the camp of God's servants and creatures, considered to be submissive to Him, and the camp of God's children. Believing in the existence of a middle ground between God and human beings will lead to certain instances of corruption. This is in fact a pretext to let God's servants serve Him as well as His partner.

2.7 The reason behind materialistic people's rejection of monotheism

A faithful person believes that there is a superior and greater truth beyond what can be seen on the surface of things, and if it had not been for that truth, these phenomena would not have happened. Materialistic people say that they cannot be committed to anything other than what they can see. They say, "In spite of all our efforts at laboratories, we have not been able to find a sign of the entity that monotheists talk about." Materialistic people of the modern era believe that there is no other truth beyond matter. In fact, they say these things because they have been intellectually and spiritually frustrated by the divine school. They believe that managing the lives of human beings, administering justice and eliminating discrimination are not possible <except> through a materialistic school of thought. Therefore, they turn their back on the divine school of thought.

If a study were conducted about the intellectual state of those who believe in one of the "isms" of modern world, the results would show that denying this truth is not because they are stubbornly opposed to God. These people either do not have a convincing rational reason for the existence of God, or they cannot accept the reasons for the existence of God. Often there is no rational reason for the other side of the argument either. There has never been any reason against

the existence of God. There is nobody who presents a reason against the existence of God. Since the beginning of time up until today, not even a single person among all materialistic people of the world has said, "I will present a reason and prove that God does not exist." They just say, "Everybody is saying a different thing in this regard. It has not been proven to me that God exists." Or they say, "I did not understand or accept the reasons for His existence." The Holy Quran refers to the same thing: "They only conjecture" [The Holy Quran, 45: 24]. They are just after thought and conjecture; otherwise they cannot reject the existence of God through reasoning.

2.8 The reason behind the tendency towards materialism

The reason behind the tendency towards materialist schools of thought is that they think that materialistic schools of thought are better able to manage the world. They say materialistic schools of thought are better able to eliminate oppression, discrimination, inequality and tyranny. Materialistic people say that religion is not able to do these things. Why do they say religion is not able to do these things? Because they do not know anything about the common conception of religion except what they have observed about the traditional and imitative conception that ordinary people have. To be brief, they do not have any information about religion. If they were asked what religion is, they would simply name a number of religions and say: "These things are like an opiate. They are equal to oppression. They cannot help solve the problems that people suffer from." It goes without saying that when one is faced with this kind of reasoning, the best and the most appropriate response is to say, "Yes, if you find a religion that copes with oppressors, cooperates with tyrants, fails to side with the oppressed even for a moment, fails to help solve the problems that people suffer from and does not have the slightest contribution to the future of the people, you can act as our representative and reject that religion wherever you find it. Do not accept that religion even for a moment, because if religion has a divine orientation, it cannot be like that."

2.9 Obeying Satan

“And most surely the devils suggest to their friends that they should contend with you. And if you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists” [The Holy Quran, 6: 121]. The devils and the embodiments of evil inspire their friends, their allies and the members of their camp to challenge you. The devils and the embodiments of evil and corruption encourage their agents, companions, allies, and the members of their camp to debate with you, tease you and challenge you. What is your obligation when faced with Satan’s companions? “If you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists.” Obeying Satan, that is the core of evil against the Merciful One, causes people to become polytheists. Satan is against God. Obeying Satan or obeying the companions of Satan – namely, his mercenaries, the tools of his actions, his friends, the members of his camp and his servants – causes polytheism. “And if you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheists.”

2.10 Does God love some people more than others?

“And the Jews and the Christians say: We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones” [The Holy Quran, 5: 18]. The Jews said that they were the sons of God and His friends. In response to their claims, Allah the Exalted points out one of their crimes. Allah the Exalted asks them why they murdered His messengers if they were His friends and relatives. “Why then did you kill Allah’s Prophets?” [The Holy Quran, 2: 91] Allah the Exalted asks them why they killed His chosen servants. The Jews claimed that they were the children and relatives of God and that they deserved special privileges. Islam says this claim is wrong. In another āyah, Allah the Exalted says, “Say: O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the favorites of Allah to the exclusion of other people, then invoke death if you are truthful” [The Holy Quran, 62: 6]. God told them, “If you really believe you are close friends and relatives of God, then pray for death so that you are freed from this unstable life and join your beloved God who is your friend and relative.” Then He says, “But they will never invoke it” [The Holy Quran, 62:

7]. God says the Jews would never pray for death.

3.0 The effects of a monotheistic worldview

3.1 Instances of worship

Sometimes people worship somebody and consider him to be sacred and to enjoy supernatural powers. For example, throughout history some people used to worship some idols or saints. At first, sanctity and spiritual respect appear to be the signs of worship. For example, Christians consider Christ and his pure-hearted mother (may God's greetings be upon them) to have some kind of sanctity. They kneel in front of the statues of Christ and Mary, and they cry and worship them. Worship is not just bowing, prostrating and praising as a sign of heartfelt respect. Worship does not just consist of praying or holding up one's hands with humility. There are some other things that can be called worship in the second sense of the word. What is the second sense of the word "worship"? Worship also means obeying. Obeying somebody in an independent and unconditional way is the same as worshipping them.

According to the Quranic culture, obeying anyone or anything other than God, including political and religious power, internal factors like human passions and carnal tendencies, and external factors like a woman, a person who is unduly respected or a friend, is the same as worshipping them. Anybody who obeys someone or something is in fact worshipping them.

3.2 Worshipping God and Satan

Imam Jawad (a.s.) said: "Whoever pays full attention to a speaker becomes his servant." The scope of worship is much wider, not only does it include obeying, but it also includes paying undivided attention to somebody. Does this mean we should avoid paying attention even to truthful comments? The above-mentioned hadith continues, "And if the speaker speaks the words of God, then the listener is the servant of God." If the speaker has full attention of his audience and is speaking

the words of God, the people who are listening to him with full attention and concentration are in fact worshipping God. "And if the speaker speaks the words of Satan, then the listener is the servant of Satan." But if the speaker speaks the words of Satan and his words go against the logic and philosophy of divine thought, his audience are in fact obeying and worshipping Satan as they listen to him. Basically, the speaker himself is Satan. From a Quranic perspective, the speaker is Satan itself, not his representative or mouthpiece.

3.3 A monotheistic society

When monotheism enters a society, all servants of God in that society become connected. In a monotheistic society, all people, with different skin colors and from different races and social backgrounds, are relatives. When people are connected to the Origin and Creator of the world and to the Almighty Custodian who has full control over all phenomena in the world, they are connected to the same origin and receive help and assistance from the same source. This is the inevitable result of faith in monotheism. From this monotheistic perspective, it is not just human beings who are connected to one another. Rather, all elements of the world, all animals, all things, the heaven, the earth and all other things are connected to one another as well as to human beings. Therefore, everything that a human being can see, feel and perceive is a world and a constellation placed in a wholesome world and a safe environment.

3.4 Characteristics of an Islamic society

"Islamic society" means a society in which worship of God prevails among all members of that society. In other words, an Islamic society is a society in which the general course is based on God's orders. The devotion of a society is manifested in a number of things. If these things are seen in a society, the members of that society are God's servants and the society itself is a divine system.

First, this Islamic society should be ruled by God's servants, not His enemies. Ṭāghūts, rulers and governments not sanctioned by God, should not dominate this society. Those who demand that people obey them instead of God, those who want people to serve them like Nimrod, Pharaoh and other ṭāghūts of history, and the people whose hearts are not familiar with God, these people must not dominate this society. It is God's servants who should rule this Islamic society.

Second, divine rules should be practiced in that society. The people should observe the rules of God, not rules that are rooted in the passions, carnal desires or faulty judgments of human beings. The legal framework of that society should be determined by the Holy Quran and divine rules.

Third, justice should be administered in that society because a society in which there is oppression is not a divine society.

Fourth, the members of that society should be treated with respect. The people of that society should be considered honorable. Human beings should not be considered as tools. In that society human beings should be viewed as managers and the best creatures of the world, not as creatures that should only be fed to work. That society should not be indifferent to whether or not its members are capable of understanding things and whether or not the hearts of its members are enthusiastic about lofty goals. Human beings should be honored in that society. The āyah "And surely We have honored the children of Adam" [The Holy Quran, 17: 70] is not just a ceremonial gesture. It is a principle. It is a foundation of an Islamic society. A community in which this principle is not practiced is not an Islamic society. A community in which the people are humiliated, a community in which powerful individuals make the people follow their whims and a community in which the people are not allowed to think, acquire knowledge, choose their path and make efforts on the divine path they have chosen, these are not Islamic communities.

Fifth, there should not be any discrimination in an Islamic society. Being white or black and Arab or non-Arab or being a member of a certain tribe, family or social class should not be

grounds for discrimination. Human beings should simply be treated as human beings, and privileges should be granted on the basis of piety. All of these signs were present in the early years of Islam.

Sixth, *jihād* in the way of God is among the signs of an Islamic and divine society. A society in which there is no *jihād* and no efforts are made for the sake of God cannot be an Islamic society.

3.5 The effect of monotheism on the economic structure of society

In a monotheistic society, everybody should benefit from social facilities. This does not mean that everybody should have the same amount of money in a monotheistic society. Money should not be distributed equally. Rather, it is the facilities and opportunities that should be distributed evenly. Some people are hardworking, and some other people are lazy. If somebody works harder, he earns more money, and it is not right to give his earnings to other people so that everybody has the same amount of money. Rather, it is the opportunities for studying, training and working that should be distributed evenly among the people of a monotheistic society. Opportunities are distributed evenly among the people of a monotheistic society.

The effect of monotheism on the economic structure of society is that it necessitates creating a state of balance in society, not a state of equality. At the beginning of his caliphate, Imām 'Alī (a.s.) said that God has required the '*ulamā*,' legal scholars, not to tolerate the hunger of the oppressed and the gluttony of oppressors. This duty was the reason why Imām 'Alī (a.s.) accepted to be the caliph. This is the most obvious duty of an Islamic economic system, and the economic issues of Islam are inferred on the basis of this duty. This state of balance is the result of faith in God. It goes without saying that the situation of society would be different if there were no God, if this world did not have an owner beyond human beings and if human beings could own whatever they gained relying on their own power.

A monotheistic perspective on the financial issues of a monotheistic society is one of the most important requirements. According to the Holy Quran: "And give them of the wealth of Allah which He has given you" [The Holy Quran, 24: 33]. Whatever human beings have belongs to God. All wealth is from God, which is held in trust. Whatever people may "own" has been bestowed on them by God, and it should be returned to Him. This is a necessity for the monotheistic ideology.

3.6 The effect of monotheism on the ethics of society

In a monotheistic society, the way the people think and their attitude towards their religious brothers, other people and their own personal lives is different from the norms in materialistic systems. They live in the presence of God. They ask God to fulfill their needs. They love Him. They Fear Him. They seek refuge in Him. They consider themselves as His servants. They love His servants. They do not oppress His servants, and they do not envy them. All the virtues mentioned in books of ethics result from faith in God. Faith in God forms the foundations of Islamic ethics.

3.7 The effect of monotheistic thought on the structure of an Islamic society

There is a remarkable and fundamental issue that is basic to the discussions of the social issues of Islam. Paying attention to this issue can help people understand all social issues in Islam. The fundamental question is: What effects do monotheistic and Islamic beliefs have on the social structure of an Islamic society? In other words, what is the difference between the general structure of a faithful society and that of a society whose people do not believe in God? Is faith in God limited to accepting the existence of God without letting it affect one's behavior? Is faith in God limited to accepting the existence of God without engaging in daily prayers, fasting and avoidance of dishonesty? Is faith in God irrelevant to the form and system of the society one lives in? Or should faith in God be reflected in the social life of faithful and monotheistic people? There is

no doubt that the purpose of faith in God is not just to improve the hearts and minds of people. Rather, faith in God means building a world that is appropriate for this belief. Having faith in monotheism and in God affects both political and economic systems of a monotheistic society. It also affects the ethical principles of every member of a monotheistic society. A society whose people have faith in God should be ruled by a religious government. That is to say, Islam, *shari'a* and Islamic rules and regulations should govern the life of the people. And those who practice these regulations in a monotheistic society should be the most qualified people in that society. First, they should know *shari'a* and Islamic rules better than anybody else. They should have complete mastery over *shari'a* and divine rules. Second, they should have the capability of avoiding sins and deliberate diversion and mistakes, that is, the same thing that is known as "justice" in Islamic culture.

3.8 The root of freedom in Islamic culture

The monotheistic world-view is the root of freedom in Islamic culture. The principle of monotheism, with its deep, subtle and accurate meanings, guarantees freedom of man. That is to say, anybody who has faith in the oneness of God and believes in monotheism must allow people to be free. The first thing that all divine prophets used to do was to invite people to obey God and avoid *ta'ghūt* and non-divine people who wanted to shackle and enslave human beings. "Serve Allah and shun Evil" [The Holy Quran, 16: 36]. Therefore, Islamic freedom is based on monotheism. The spirit of monotheism is to reject serving anyone except God. The root of freedom in Islam is the personality and inherent value of human beings who are not prepared to serve anyone except God. In fact the root of man's freedom is monotheism and knowledge of God. In Islamic culture, free human beings cannot obey anyone but God.

4.0 Monotheism, equality of rights among human beings

The meaning of God's order is not the same as the meaning of the Book. Of course God's order is in His Book. However, the Book is one thing, and God's order is quite another. God's order is what He has announced to His servants. Allah the Exalted has provided a set of general guidelines for the life of human beings. That is to say, God has specified a framework and human beings have to move on within this framework. What is this framework? This framework is what all divine prophets used to promote among people. It is the same thing that is inferred from Islamic principles, namely, monotheism, respect for human beings and equality in terms of such things as rights, nature and rules. It is this framework that evolves throughout history, and it is a movement, an order and an agreement between God and His servants.

What is it that *ṭāghūt* do? They change this state of affairs. God calls people to monotheism. God asks people to worship Him, not each other. But *ṭāghūt* step in and change this state of affairs. They encourage people to worship God's servants in one way or another. God invites people to respect and value human beings, and this was the basis of God's plan. But *ṭāghūt* base their plans on humiliation of man. Today in the materialistic western culture, people feel the existence of a void in their daily lives that can only be filled by God. This is because they have strayed away from their original nature, and they have been changed. Non-divine plans make human beings forget God. This is not to say that non-divine plans make people forget the name of God or the existence of a truth called God. They may even appear to have faith in God. What they forget is the right of God, that is to say, they do not know the position of God in society.

4.1 The condition for salvation

Salvation is the deliverance that has been promised by the Prophet of Islam (s.w.a.): "Say there is no god but Allah, and you will achieve salvation." Salvation from wrong thought, bad behavior, attachments, shackles and millstones that hang from

people's hands, heads, necks and hearts, and then salvation from oppressive powers that oppress human beings. That is to say, if a people with perfect thoughts, minds, hearts and beliefs are ruled by an oppressive, colonial, exploiting or autocratic power, they have not achieved perfect salvation. Perfect salvation is salvation that affects the heart, mind, behavior, society, politics and spirituality. These kinds of salvation are the goal of religion and monotheism.

4.2 The paradise for monotheists

Everything that righteous servants of God do, including their sleep, eating, speech, trade, sport, studying and political and social activities, is in line with their movement towards God. By moving towards this goal, a paradise will be created around human beings, a paradise which is the result of human beings' emotions and willpower being in line with the natural course of creation. In this Islamic, monotheistic and spiritual life, there is no contradiction, confrontation and discord. The monotheistic world-view creates a paradise within human beings.

4.3 Monotheism in the political system

Monotheism means that man must not worship anybody except God. Anything other than God is *tāghūt* and is the opposite of God. Therefore, whenever obedience to man is in line with obedience to God in the political system of a country, it is appropriate. And whenever obedience is to anything other than God, it is wrong. Basically, this is the foundation of an Islamic system.

Polytheistic thoughts, or more precisely, satanic and *tāghūtī* thoughts, affect the personal and social behavior of people and the way a social system is formed. *Tāghūt* is another word for Satan. Satan means a force that creates evil, corruption and deviation. *Tāghūt* means "rebel", which is the same as evil, corruption and deviation. And *tāghūtī* forces are satanic thoughts.

4.4 Broad perspective

A monotheist is broadminded. A monotheist is liberated from being narrow-minded and shortsighted. A monotheist does not say, "I was defeated in this arena" or "our camp is forced to retreat in this arena." A monotheist does not accept defeat. He knows that the territory of monotheistic thought is as vast as the life of humanity. The vision of a monotheist is not limited to material things and insignificant needs. When a monotheist takes a look around him, apart from material needs, he sees tens and hundreds of needs that are among the greatest and the most important needs of human beings. His attention is not focused solely on insignificant needs. When a monotheist takes a look around him, he sees the future as extremely vast. A monotheist does not believe that the world is finite. This is because he sees this world as connected to the hereafter. He considers this world and the hereafter as two sides of the same entity. He does not consider death to be the end of this path. Rather, he sees death as a door and a passageway that leads to a vaster world. These are the characteristics of monotheism. Death is the end of everything for a person who is not a monotheist, no matter how selfless he is and no matter how interested he is in noble human ideas. <On the contrary> for a monotheist, death is the beginning of another life in a more interesting and more pleasant environment. If a materialistic person is truly selfless, he will be prepared to step into what he believes to be nonexistence. But it is easier for a monotheist, even one who is far less selfless than a materialistic person, to drop himself into what a materialistic person believes to be nonexistence. This is because a monotheist does not believe in what a materialistic person calls nonexistence. He thinks of death as another state of human life.

4.5 No fear for monotheists

The most important psychological effect of monotheism on human beings is that it causes monotheists not to fear the enemies on the path of God, on the path of fulfilling their obligations and on the path of what they consider to be the

purpose of their existence. Addressing faithful people, the Holy Quran says on several occasions: "So do not fear them, and fear Me." Somebody who fears God will not fear anybody else. Fear will be removed from the heart of anybody who is a monotheist and believes in the power of God. It is fear that takes this world and the hereafter away from the people who have them. The fear of poverty causes people to avoid making charitable donations. The fear of hardships causes people to humiliate themselves, commit crimes and cause tragedies. The fear of losing their life causes people to take the life of other people or ruin their social life.

4.6 Dealing with *ṭāghūts* in a monotheistic manner

The envoy of the Muslim army entered the glorious Sassanid palace. The envoy who was wearing tattered clothes stepped into the palace of such a great political power. Did he feel afraid? Not at all. After all, when an unimportant person meets a great and powerful person, he tries his best to form some kind of relationship with that powerful person and get close to him, even through flattery and expressions of fear or humility. Was that what happened? Not at all. The envoy walked towards the throne. Allegedly, he even put his foot on Yazdegerd's throne because he saw that Yazdegerd would not come to him and take the letter. He was carrying a message. Others stepped forward to take the letter from him, but he refused to give it to them and said that he would only hand it to Yazdegerd himself. And Yazdegerd would not stand up and go to the Arab, so the envoy had to step forward and give it to him. He went up to Yazdegerd's throne and handed the letter to him. The king of Persia asked, "Why did you come here?" He replied, "I am here to liberate people from worshiping God's servants and lead them towards worshiping God and to liberate them from the restrictions of this world and lead them towards the vastness of this world and the hereafter." He told Yazdegerd that he had come to liberate the people living in different parts of the country from worshiping him and his governors and commanders.

4.7 Monotheistic responsibilities in life

First and foremost, faith in every thought and creed must be based on conscious knowledge. Unquestioning and blind faith is not acceptable. Second, faith must be accompanied by responsibilities. What people are required to have faith in is definitely something that brings about a personal or social responsibility, a responsibility that may be related to humanity or its destiny. Monotheism is a kind of awareness that brings about obligations and responsibilities for human beings.

The responsibilities that monotheism puts on the shoulders of faithful people are considered to be the biggest, the heaviest and the most significant responsibilities among all Islamic and religious obligations.

The first responsibility is that worship and obedience <be> restricted to God only. The second responsibility that monotheism puts on the shoulders of its followers is to establish a monotheistic and classless society, a society in which people are not separated from one another on the basis of rights and privileges, a society in which all people live under the same legal roof, a society in which everybody moves in the same direction and enjoys the same facilities and rights.

4.8 Being prepared to defend monotheistic thought

Throughout history, there has always been a confrontation between justice and injustice, and this confrontation is not something that is particular to the modern world. The confrontation between good and evil is the result of the confrontation between justice and injustice. Allah the Exalted says, "And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques would have certainly been pulled down" [The Holy Quran, 22: 40]. Using the power that they receive from reliance on God and the material sources of power, some groups of people in the world should check other groups of people who spread corruption on earth. As a result, the war between good and evil has been a constant throughout history. The difference between divine faiths and non-divine thoughts is that from

the perspective of divine faiths the war [between justice and injustice] is something that is fought for the sake of God. It is not a blind act. It is not a purposeless and futile act that is done with the aim of achieving power. The war is considered to be jihad in the way of God. It was due to this reason that during his ten-year rule in Medina, the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) fought about 70 wars with polytheists and the enemies of Islam. During this ten-year period, the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) did not have a moment of peace. And it was due to this reason that the Islamic civilization, culture and ethics continued as a movement in history. It is absolutely clear and natural for *ṭāghūts* of the world to let not even a single righteous movement remain in the world. It is natural for them to want to uproot this movement. Divine and monotheistic thought is like a sweet-smelling flower that will be destroyed if it is left undefended. When one believes that fighting in the way of God, which is in fact an attempt to defend divine and spiritual values, is a necessity, meeting the requirements of this war becomes another necessity. The principle that Muslims should prepare themselves to fight in the way of God is mentioned in the Holy Quran as well. "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies" [The Holy Quran, 8: 60].

Islamic Civilization

Islamic civilization came into being due to the scientific movement that started from the very first day of Islam. Less than two centuries had passed since the advent of Islam when the scientific Islamic movement started. It is important to consider this movement in its original setting. In order to see that movement in a modern light, one has to visualize the scientific poles of the modern world in contrast with a nation in a corner of the world that had not heard of any form of civilization. Such a backward country started to build a civilization and overtook all other civilizations in 100 to 150 years. That was a miraculous movement. It is extremely hard to imagine such a thing. That would have been impossible if it had not been for the fact that Islam was thirsty for knowledge, the acquisition and teaching of knowledge, and a scholarly lifestyle.

Islamic civilization got its essence from within itself. Of course a thriving civilization has to borrow from other civilizations. They applied their knowledge, discovered the most impenetrable secrets of the material world, utilized ideas, carried out great scientific activities, founded universities on a global scale, and created tens of wealthy and powerful countries as well as a political power that was unique in the history of mankind. The question is: how did all of this become possible? There was no power in history, except the political power of Islam, which extended from the heart of Europe to the heart of the Indian subcontinent. No power could ever rule over such a vast stretch of land for a sustained period of time. The Middle Ages in Europe was a period of ignorance and adversity for Europeans, who refer to it as the "Dark Ages." The Dark Ages in Europe coincided with a period of scientific brilliance in Muslim countries, including Iran. That political and scientific power, material glory, statesmanship, and utilization of all constructive and thriving human powers were all due to Islamic teachings.

The fourth century of the Hijri calendar was the peak of the blossoming of Islamic civilization. The fourth century of the Hijri calendar, that is, the eleventh century AD, when ignorance was at its peak in Europe, was the peak of the Islamic blossoming in Iran. All scientists, except for a very limited number of them, were almost exclusively from Iran. Westerners got their knowledge from the east and from Iran. Iranians established most of the fields that are currently studied throughout the world. The Renaissance in Europe had its roots in the translations of the works that had been produced in Islamic countries. That was while religion was much more influential in Iran than in Europe. Therefore, we can conclude that religion is not an obstacle in the way of science.

But there is something that can pose serious obstacles to science: different kinds of public ignorance and the Christian superstitions of the time. Not even a single scholar was ever insulted for his knowledge in the Islamic era. That was while in Europe several people were killed, stoned, hanged, or burnt to death for the simple fact that they knew something. What had happened in Europe, due to superstitious religious beliefs mixed with extreme versions of distorted Christianity, was generalized to the entire world. Now what is Islam to be blamed for? What is the fault of Muslims and Muslim nations?

Although Islam was a moral and spiritual movement, scientific advancement and economic progress are also goals of Islam. Only fifty years after its advent, Islam ruled more than fifty percent of the world's civilizations. During its first two centuries, the great Islamic world turned into the peak of human civilization in terms of science, different types of knowledge, and social and economic progress. That would have been impossible if it had not been for the sake of Islamic teachings, which paid attention to spirituality as well as material progress.

The materialistic western civilization directs all people to materialism. Money, gluttony, and lust have turned into the greatest concerns. In major parts of the modern world, sincerity, forgiveness, and selflessness have been replaced with dishonesty, greed, stinginess, jealousy, and other vices.

Today, the reason that the advanced knowledge and super modern civilization of the west is not capable of delivering mankind is that this civilization is not accompanied by human values. Wherever there is knowledge, but human conscience, spirituality, morality, and emotions are absent, mankind will not be able to benefit from that knowledge. Knowledge, in the absence of spirituality and morality, would turn into an atomic bomb and take the lives of innocent people. This type of knowledge was used to manufacture weapons and kill civilians in Lebanon, in the occupied Palestinian lands, and in other parts of the world. This type of knowledge produced lethal chemical weapons that were used in Halabcheh and other parts of the world to kill women, children, and young men and to destroy human beings and animals alike.

In our Islamic civilization and our sacred government, which aspires to that civilization, we have set ourselves the goal of acquiring knowledge along with spirituality. That is why the western world is sensitive to our adherence to spirituality. That is why they have labeled our religious faith as bias. That is why they are claiming that our tendency towards moral principles and human values is opposed to human rights. We must benefit from the practical and theoretical outcomes and successful experiences of other people, but at the same time we must sow the seeds of our material and spiritual progress in order to achieve indigenous solutions to our problems. And we must take care of these seeds until they germinate. We must not seek to emulate other people.

Democracy and Religious Democracy

1.0 Religious Democracy

1.1 What is democracy?

Democracy means that the opinion of the people should be the criterion for determining the political methods of managing and governing a country. Democracy means that the political system and its officials should originate from among the people. A genuine democratic system lies where the decisions, emotions, faith, and interests of the people overlap.

1.2 Two sides of democracy

Democracy has two sides. One side requires the establishment of a political system on the basis of the wishes and votes of the people. That is to say, the people should elect the government and its key officials directly or indirectly. The people should willingly identify the right choice and make a decision so that they can fulfill their religious duty. They will have no duty to carry out in the absence of knowledge and willingness.

After government officials are elected in a democracy, they take on serious responsibilities. This is the second side of democracy.

1.3 The meaning of religious democracy

Religious democracy ties the rule of God's religion to the votes, beliefs, faith, wishes and emotions of the people. Just as we consider ourselves as servants of God alone, so we ask Allah the Exalted to help us tread the path of righteous people: "You (alone) we worship. You (alone) we ask for help. Show us the right path, the path of those on whom You bestowed grace." [The Holy Quran, 1: 5-7] Following the path of righteous people and God's prominent servants is the same

as pledging allegiance to faith, religion and spirituality. It is not the same as surrendering to a particular person. It is not the same as surrendering to the whim of a particular individual. In Islam, it is religion that is in power, the kind of religion that pays attention to prosperity of all human beings. And this is something for which human beings are responsible.

1.4 The founder of logical democracy

In fact democracy belongs to Islam. It was Islam that founded the appropriate and logical form of democracy. All Muslims, men and women, went to the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) and pledged allegiance to him. At that time women did not enjoy a good position in society. Women had been kept behind in Arabia. Even in the Iranian Empire and the Roman Empire, women were not allowed to prove themselves. But the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) took orders from God alone. "O Prophet, when believing women come to you to pledge that they will not associate anything with Allah...." [The Holy Quran, 60: 12] Allah the Exalted tells the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) that when believing women go to him to pledge allegiance to him, they should follow certain principles, just like believing men. Both men and women went to the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) to pledge allegiance to him. Hearts and wills came together, and monotheism revealed itself among the believing members of the Holy Prophet's (s.w.a.) society. It is a fact that they loved the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.), but this is irrelevant because in Islam individuals do not matter.

1.5 Why people like their rulers in Islamic communities

In Islam individuals do not matter. Nobody should call on the people to follow the whim of a person. Without representing a spiritual value, nobody deserves the love, affections, self-sacrifice and favors of another person. Muslims have been used to this state of affairs since the beginning. Muslims show their affection, love, friendliness and sincere emotions to a person only when they believe that he is connected to the center of spiritual values – namely, Islam. The same was true of the Holy

Prophet (s.w.a.), and this is why Muslims of his time liked him. This is democracy.

1.6 A method to improve government officials

Today, religious democracy is the best means that can be used to reform the behavior of government officials. Addressing Mālik al-Ashtar, the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) says, "Do not boast of the favors and kind acts that you have done to your subjects and do not try to make them realize this, do not think too much of the good that you have done to them, and do not go back upon the promises made: all these three habits are very ugly features of one's character. The practice of boasting about the favors done undoes the good done, the habit of exaggerating and thinking very highly of our good actions will make us lose the guidance of Allah, and the habit of breaking one's promises is disliked both by Allah and by man." [Nahjul Balāghah, Letter 53] The Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) says that if a person boasts about the favors he has done, he will not receive any rewards. He also says that exaggeration will kill the light of the truth. That is to say, an exaggeration causes people to ignore the element of truth that it contains.

Then the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) cites a verse from the Holy Quran: "It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do." [The Holy Quran, 61: 3] "So far as your own affairs or those of your relatives and friends are concerned, take care that you do not violate the duties laid down upon you by Allah and do not usurp the rights of mankind, be impartial and do justice to them because if you give up equity and justice, then you will certainly be a tyrant and an oppressor." Imam Ali (a.s.) asks Mālik al-Ashtar to avoid doing injustice when it comes to his friends and relatives. He asks Mālik al-Ashtar not to give any privileges to them. If a government official gives special facilities or financial resources to a specific group of people just because they are his friends or relatives, his action goes against democratic principles. "You must always appreciate and adopt a policy which is neither too severe nor too lenient, a policy which is based upon equity and

is appreciated by the people.” He tells Mālik al-Ashtar not to go to extremes and to try to please the majority of the people. “Remember that the displeasure of common men, the have-nots and the oppressed people overbalances more than the approval of important persons, while the displeasure of a few big people will be excused by the Lord if the general public and the masses of your subjects are happy with you.”

1.7 Legitimacy of political systems in Islam

The essence of religious democracy requires that the political system of a society should be managed through divine guidance and the will of the people. In Islam the people are only one pillar of legitimacy, not the only pillar. In Islam a political system should be based on the wishes and votes of the people, but it should also be based on another essential pillar: piety and justice. If an elected leader does not observe piety and justice, his rule is not legitimate from an Islamic point of view, even if everybody – let alone the majority of his people – votes for him. Imam Hussein (a.s.) says that unless a ruler observes justice, he cannot be the ruler of an Islamic community. If a ruler does not observe justice, his rule is not legitimate, no matter who has installed or elected him.

1.8 The basis of democracy in Islam

The essential point that I have repeatedly emphasized is that, as far as the Islamic Republic is concerned, being Islamic is not separate from being republican. The republican aspect of the Islamic Republic is rooted in Islam. In a system that is called “Islamic Republic”, it is not possible to ignore the people. Islam is the basis of the people’s right to elect. Therefore, religious democracy is based on a philosophy.

In religious democracy and in shari‘a, it is believed that in order for a ruler to have the right to rule, the people should want him. Why are the votes of the people important? Because in Islamic thought man is a dignified creature and his vote is valuable to Allah the Exalted. In Islam no government has the right to rule human beings unless it has been chosen by Allah

the Exalted. In Islamic jurisprudence whenever we are doubtful about the existence of a religious justification for a certain kind of Vilayat, we reject it. Why? Because the assumption is that there is no justification for a Vilayat unless proven otherwise. This is the Islamic logic. A Vilayat is acceptable only when the shari'a has approved it, and the approval of shari'a depends on the qualifications of the person who accepts the responsibility for the Vilayat. That is to say, the person who accepts the responsibility for Vilayat should be just and pious, and the people should want his Vilayat. This is the logic behind religious democracy, which is extremely firm and deep-rooted. A believer can safely accept this logic and practice it: there is no room for doubt and suspicion.

1.9 Holiness of democracy

Genuine democracy – freedom of the people, relying on the votes of the people – is sacred to us. Why? Not because of the liberal philosophy behind it, but because Allah the Exalted is our creator and the owner of our lives. According to a narration, "All people are free." The Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) says, "Take care not to make yourself a slave of anybody. Allah created you a freeman." This is what Allah the Exalted says. When the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) says something, it means that it comes from God. The same is true of the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.). They have the final say on everything. The second caliph told his agent, "You have enslaved people, while God created them free." This is a foundation for genuine democracy. The most important instance of freedom is to be able to choose one's own destiny. This is the basis of democracy.

1.10 Reconciling worship of God and democratic attitude

The paradigm of religious democracy has presented a new course of action to humanity. This course of action is aimed at saving mankind from the maladies of the systems founded on individual or party dictatorship or systems created by the influence of wealthy people and plunderers. It is a course of action that is aimed at saving mankind from sinking into the

quagmire of materialism, hedonism and lack of spirituality, a course of action that is aimed at putting an end to the conflict between worship of God and democratic attitude. In terms of its growth, permanence and success in attaining its objectives, this novel paradigm is conclusive proof against all those systems that have alienated people from the Almighty and spirituality in the name of humanism, systems which have dominated human beings in various forms in the name of democracy. In Islamic culture the best people are those who are most useful to other people. Unlike hypocritical and demagogic democracies, religious democracy is a system for rendering sincere services – services that are rendered out of sense of responsibility.

2.0 Western Democracy

2.1 Explanation of western democracy

Western democracy is rooted in liberalism. They say because man is free, dictatorship should be abolished and replaced with democracy. The kind of freedom that liberalism is based on is absolute freedom. That is to say, if they want, the people can accept something that is certain to harm them. For example, just as the English have legalized homosexuality in their parliament, so they may legalize heroin or incest only if they decide to do so. In this case there is no logical reason why they should not listen to us. They have to accept what we say. What is the difference between homosexuality and incest? In this case they do not have a logical justification for what they do. Therefore, there are no logical limits to restrict this western freedom. If they say, "This is the point where freedom goes against ethics", we can say, "What ethics? There are no ethical limits. Everybody is free." This is because liberalism is based on freedom, and no limits can restrict this freedom unless one kind of freedom goes against another kind of freedom or against the essence of communal freedom. This is the only red line that they have. In fact by relying on the philosophy of liberalism, western democracy proves its hollowness. Then all ethical values may be destroyed in society. Today those who

believe in western democracy are not prepared to acknowledge this. But this is the inevitable consequence of accepting the philosophy behind liberal democracy.

2.2 The framework of western democracy

Everything that is called democracy in the world has a framework. In western democracies the framework is the interests and wishes of wealthy people and the capitalists who dominate the fate of western communities. The votes of the people will have an effect only within that framework. If the people want something that goes against the interests of capitalists and those who have financial – and, consequently, political – power, then there is no guarantee that their democratic systems and regimes will surrender to public demands. There is a rigid framework that dominates all public demands and democracies. The same framework was dominant in socialist countries of the past that used to describe themselves as democratic. The votes of the people were insignificant outside the framework of the tendencies, policies and motives of the ruling party.

2.3 The goal of western democracy

Western democracy has failed and is outdated. Its flaws have become clear. This kind of democracy is based on a desire for power. What happens is that two groups or two parties deploy their forces against one another. If you ask them what they are after, they will tell you that they want power. Why do you want power? Do you want to promote morality in society? Do you want to help people achieve spiritual improvement? Do you want to improve living conditions of the people? Do you want to go beyond the slogans and the appearances? No, these things are not what they are looking for. After all, they are just a party trying to seize power for a few years. But this is not a valuable goal. It does not contribute to human dignity. Today, western democracy is not practiced anywhere in the world, not even in a country like America which shouts democratic slogans most loudly of all.

2.4 The legitimacy of political systems in the west

Western democracy – namely, democracy that is based on liberalism – is based on a particular philosophy. According to this philosophy, the votes of the majority of the people form the basis of the legitimacy of governments and political systems. This philosophy is based on liberalism, according to which individual freedom is not restricted by any ethical limits, and the only limit is that your freedom should not restrict freedom of other people. Absolute individual freedom in all areas, which manifests itself in the political system of the country as well – this is the philosophy behind western liberalism. It is argued that because there is always a minority and a majority in a human community, there is no choice but to force the minority to obey the majority. This is the basis of western democracy. If a government follows this principle, it is legitimate as far as liberal democracy is concerned; otherwise it is not legitimate.

3.0 Democracy in the Islamic Republic of Iran

3.1 Utilizing the experiences of humanity

Today in the Islamic Republic, we adapt the experiences of humanity according to Islamic principles. There is religious democracy in Islam. Through experience, human beings have managed to partially realize this concept in the form of parliamentary government. We adopted the idea of parliamentary government immediately. We did not reject parliamentary government. Islamic thought is flexible enough to adopt all the things that have accumulated through years and centuries of human experience. However, Islam molds these experiences according to firm Islamic principles. This is what is being practiced in Islamic Iran today.

3.2 The republican and Islamic aspects of the Islamic Republic

In the Islamic Republic, Islam is accompanied by a republican aspect. The republican aspect originates from Islam. Islam

does not allow the lack of democracy in our country. We did not learn the republican aspect from anybody. It was Islam that taught it to us. Our nation relies on Islam and believes in the republican aspect. Our people and government believe that God and the people are both important. And Allah the Exalted has given the people the opportunity to tread this path. Our nation, our government, our framework and our Constitution have managed to guarantee both the Islamic aspect and the republican aspect.

3.3 Democracy in Imam Khomeini's (r.a.) school of thought

In Imam Khomeini's (r.a.) political school of thought, human nature is both valuable and dignified, both powerful and effective. The consequence of being valuable and dignified is that the votes of the people should play a key role in managing the destiny of individuals and society. Therefore, in Imam Khomeini's (r.a.) political school of thought – which is rooted in Islam – democracy is genuine. The people freely choose their path and government officials relying on their faith. On the other hand, the Imam (r.a.) believed that it is possible to stand up against all aggressive powers of the world by relying on the steely determination of the people, and he proved this. In Imam Khomeini's (r.a.) political school of thought, democracy is rooted in religion – it is rooted in “their rule is to take counsel among themselves” [the Holy Quran, 42: 38] and in “He it is Who strengthened you with His help and with the believers” [the Holy Quran, 8: 62].

3.4 The Islamic Republic of Iran

I have repeatedly stressed that we should adopt the form, spirit and content of our system from Islam, not from foreign schools of thought or from cultures that have been trying to promote their ideas and their path in the world. That is to say, these cultures want other nations to accept what they dictate to them. We must not accept what others have decided for us. We must go after our interests and needs. We must go after what we

believe is right: Islamic teachings, Islamic justice and the path of Islam. Religious democracy is what we have used to define the form of the Islamic Republic. Religious democracy means that the goal is to practice Islamic rules and teachings in society. If these rules are practiced, it will be possible to establish genuine Islamic justice in society. Democracy is a religious obligation in the Islamic Republic. Government officials of the Islamic Republic have a religious duty to preserve this quality, and they will answer to God.

3.5 The relationship between the people and government officials

Among the nations we know, we may not be able to find another nation <that> is similar to the Iranian nation. In Iran the relationship between the people and government officials is not limited to a formal relationship, the kind of relationship that reveals itself only during election times in a particular form and for a particular purpose. The relationship between the people and government officials is rooted in emotions, religious faith and beliefs, which means that the people trust their government officials. This is a very important point that provides strong evidence to prove the existence of democracy in the Islamic Republic. This kind of democracy, which includes a mutual relationship between the people and government officials, accompanied by emotions, religious faith and heartfelt trust, is the best form of populist government.

On Islam and Christianity

1.0 Jesus Christ

1.1 A great prophet of God

Undoubtedly, the respect of Muslims for Jesus Christ is no less than that of faithful Christians for him. This great divine prophet always made efforts during his lifetime to fight oppression, transgression, corruption, and those who tried to dominate nations by relying on their wealth and power; and he caused them to suffer both in this world and the hereafter. The sufferings that this great prophet endured since his childhood – God appointed him to his prophetic mission during his childhood – were all aimed at achieving these goals.

1.2 Jesus Christ, a great prophet of God

Muslims, like Christians, believe in Jesus Christ as a great prophet of God. Jewish people cannot claim that Moses is only their prophet. All Christians also believe in Moses, as do all Muslims. This is the case for Jesus Christ as well. Jesus Christ is not a prophet only for Christians. Rather, he is a prophet for Muslims as well.

Iranian Muslims love this great prophet and have high regard for him. Iranian Christians – whether Assyrians or the Christian people living in the northern parts of Iran and Orumieh province – believe that Christianity originated in Iran. They believe that Jesus Christ started his mission in Iran and Christianity was, in fact, spread from here. From a historical point of view, they may be right.

1.3 The Virgin Mary, a model for all humans

When citing examples of faithful people, the Holy Quran does not usually mention men. Rather, it cites examples from among women. Allah the Exalted mentions two women as examples

of prominent and faithful “humans,” and not prominent and faithful “women.”

This means that Allah the Exalted does not usually mention prophets, great men, or scientific and religious figures when He intends to cite an example of a prominent and faithful human. Rather, he mentions two women, one of whom is Pharaoh's wife and the other the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ and daughter of Imran.

The Virgin Mary was a young woman who stood firm against the accusations and suspicions of the people of her town and region, and returned to her people holding her son in her arms.

1.4 The Virgin Mary, the manifestation of piety

There is a point in the Holy Quran about the story of the Virgin Mary that has attracted my attention to a great extent. From the viewpoint of Muslims, the Virgin Mary is the manifestation of piety and spiritual purity: “And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her of Our inspiration.” [The Holy Quran, 66: 12]. This has been repeated several times in the Holy Quran.

The issue of guarding her chastity has been greatly stressed about the Virgin Mary. What were the circumstances like? This is, in my opinion, a very important point. A girl came to a temple and stayed there until her youth. What factors and motivations caused her to resist all those temptations with such a superhuman power? If her power were not superhuman, the issue would not be so much emphasized in the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran says “guarded her chastity,” which means that she remained pure. This is a very important issue and should be a lesson for everyone.

Through guarding her chastity and remaining pure in that critical situation, the Virgin Mary could change history.

1.5 Special features of the story of Jesus

Any time I read the *sūra* "Maryam," I am greatly impressed. This has been the case since my youth. This is because the story of that *sūra* is a truly wonderful story. The story of the birth of Jesus Christ – in that particular place, at that particular time, and under those special circumstances – is so great that it cannot be adequately described, except through artistic works.

This is a very strange and rare event – the role of the Virgin Mary and Zechariah in this event, the special social conditions of the time, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, which were like a shining beacon of guidance that shed light on human life and minds. It should also be noted that the teachings of Jesus were no different than those of Moses – that is, they were a complement to the teachings of Moses. Most of the teachings of Jesus Christ were a repetition of the teachings of Moses. However, when Jesus Christ passed on his teachings, the followers of Moses were so alienated from his teachings that they believed the teachings of Jesus Christ were an innovation and an instance of blasphemy. This was because the teachings of Moses had been distorted. This was so even though the teachings of Moses and Jesus both originated from the same source. And the teachings of Jesus were based on the same concepts as those of Moses. Both the teachings of Moses and those of Jesus were sent to them through divine revelation. In this story, the role of distortions, the role of the powers of the time, and the selfishness and misunderstandings of some people are clearly mentioned.

1.6 The standard-bearer of guidance

Jesus Christ, who is the manifestation of divine attributes, raised the flag of guiding and saving humans at a time when ignorance, injustice, and inattention to human values were prevalent. He stood up to oppressing powers – which were dependent on their wealth and power – and he promoted justice, mercy, and monotheism. Today those who believe in that great prophet – Muslims and Christians – should follow the teachings and the path of divine prophets and try to

promote human virtues on the basis of the teachings of these prophets.

1.7 Savior of humanity from oppression

Jesus Christ was equipped with the power of performing miracles and carried a divine message for humanity. This message saved them from the darkness of polytheism, atheism, ignorance, and oppression and guided them towards justice, knowledge, and worshipping God. He never hesitated to fight evil and call people to piety throughout his life.

And this is the lesson that all Christians and Muslims who believe in the prophethood of Jesus Christ should learn. Today humanity is in need of these teachings more than ever before. And Islam, which is a complement to real Christianity, has put calling humanity to piety and moral perfection high on its list of priorities. Making use of the great powers of nature through their God-given knowledge, misguided humans tend to tread a different path, and this makes the duty of the followers of the divine faiths even heavier.

The domineering powers and governments of the world have made life difficult for nations and individuals, and they do not refrain from inflicting any type of oppression on humanity. They do these things in the name of Christianity. These powers are in fact totally unaware of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

1.8 Calling humans to prosperity

Jesus Christ called on people to follow the path of God, which is the path of prosperity for human beings. And he warned people against pursuing carnal desires and undermining their spiritual purity through engaging in evil deeds and oppressing others.

The corrupt and bullying powers that were dependent on wealth and power persecuted that divine prophet and leveled insults against him. They even tried to take his life. And when God saved the life of Jesus Christ, these powers inflicted several years of horrible torture on the disciples and followers

of Jesus Christ. They were trying to put an end to the teachings of Jesus Christ, teachings which were against corruption, oppression, polytheism, causing war, deceiving people, and pursuing carnal desires.

Those corrupt and oppressive powers that pursued carnal desires, caused wars against people, and deceived them could not tolerate the existence of the divine faiths and prophets and those who followed the path of God.

1.9 The birth of Jesus Christ

The birthday anniversary of Jesus Christ has been celebrated for hundreds of years. Why are these occasions so important? This is because they are a critical and determining point, indeed a turning point, in history. This means that these events caused a sudden change in the course of history.

Every year, I congratulate our fellow Christian countrymen and other followers of Christianity throughout the world on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of Jesus Christ. However, since many of the Christians who live in Iran believe that the birth date of Jesus Christ is not December 25, I follow what is commonly believed and do not send a congratulatory message on that date. Rather, I wait until January before I congratulate them on the birthday anniversary of Jesus Christ. This is because I intend to follow what most of our fellow Christian countrymen believe about the birth date of Jesus Christ.

I congratulate all the Christians of the world as well as all Muslims on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of Jesus Christ. This ten-day period is the period during which it is believed that Jesus Christ was born. I hope all Muslims and Christians of the world model themselves after that great prophet, try to become truly familiar with that prophet, and follow him.

2.0 Islam and Christianity

2.1 Showing gratitude towards a Christian emperor

It has been quoted in a hadith that a group of people went to meet the Holy prophet (s.w.a.) on behalf of Aṣḥama ibn Abjar who was the emperor of Aksum at the time of the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.). They intended to deliver a message to the Holy Prophet as is customary today among governments.

Aṣḥama ibn Abjar was the emperor of Aksum and was a follower of Christianity like other emperors and kings of the time. But when the delegation came to meet the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.), he himself stood up and started to serve them. At that time, those who were with the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) said: "We are here. Let us serve the guests." The Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) responded: "When a group of Muslims traveled to Aksum, the emperor of Aksum respected them a lot. I intend to express gratitude for what he did."

2.2 Common acts of worship in Islam and Christianity

We all know that praying is not limited to Muslims only. Rather, the prophets who lived before Prophet Muhammad (s.w.a) put saying prayers and giving *ṣakāt* high on their priority list.

Jesus Christ has been quoted as saying: "God has advised me to promote prayers and *ṣakāt*." This has been mentioned in different parts of the Quran. Allah the Exalted says: "Like praying and giving *ṣakāt*, fasting is also an obligation which is not particular to Muslims. Other nations and previous prophets were also sent on a mission to promote fasting."

2.3 Wise sayings of Jesus Christ

Among Islamic traditions, some are related to Jesus Christ. These traditions usually appear in all Islamic books of *ḥadīth* and are among the most meaningful Islamic traditions. These narrations contain very wise and meaningful concepts.

Christians do not claim that the only words of Jesus Christ are those that appear in different versions of the Gospel.

Besides the current versions of the Gospel, there are other versions as well, and it is possible that the words of Jesus Christ that appear in Islamic traditions are the parts that are missing in the current versions of the Gospel. However, the followers of Christianity should regard the words of Jesus Christ that have been quoted by Muslim Imams as valid and make use of them, too [besides what has been said in the Gospel].

This could act as a means to bring the followers of different faiths closer to one another. Muslims can present a part of the teachings of Jesus Christ to all humanity. The words of Jesus Christ that appear in Islamic traditions are all very wise and full of exquisite points. Of course, I have read the different versions of the Gospel several times in the past. The current versions of the Gospel – the four books that are usually referred to by Christians – are full of wise sayings.

It is true that the principles held by Muslims are different from what has been said in the different versions of the Gospel. But everyone should accept wise sayings.

2.4 Discovering the common points between Islam and Christianity

It is appropriate to create a connection between youth and religion and to promote religious beliefs in society. Religion is a divine blessing and every society that can help its people benefit from this blessing will achieve a lot of positive results. Of course interacting with the youth is a delicate, yet rewarding task.

There are many common points between Islam and Christianity as well as among all divine faiths. The dialogues that take place between Muslims and Christians in bilateral or multilateral conferences can help us identify these common points.

Such dialogues may not always be aimed at bringing the viewpoints of a particular religion close to those of another religion. Rather, it could be the case that the common points or similar viewpoints of two religions are identified. The purpose of such dialogues is not to prove the validity of a particular

religion or to reject a particular religion. Rather, the purpose is to find the common viewpoints of religions regarding the most important matters of human life.

2.5 The common viewpoint of Islam and Christianity regarding freedom

The issue of freedom has always been a primary concern for humanity. What is meant by freedom and what are its limits? Different religions have said different things in this regard. Today the issue of freedom can be one of the issues discussed from the viewpoint of Islam and Christianity.

Currently, we see that some extreme measures are sometimes taken in this regard. Regarding certain aspects of people's lives, dictatorial measures, as well as covert and overt methods of interference, have deprived people of their freedom. Yet in some other aspects, excessive freedom – which is indeed not freedom, but debauchery – is given to people.

From a religious perspective, both cases are regarded as a type of deviation from moral principles. Both Islam and Christianity share the same views regarding the rejection of such extreme measures as contrary to true freedom. Today one of the most important duties of those who are concerned about the destiny of humanity and the young generation is to fight increasing corruption and immorality in the world. In particular, the Christian system – currently based in Europe – shoulders a heavy duty in this regard.

There are hands which have seriously spread corruption, and it is very much necessary that the body of churches, particularly Catholic churches, oppose this phenomenon – which is not anything new – in a serious and logical manner by making use of their power and widespread influence. If the followers of Christianity in Europe fight corruption, many of the people living outside Europe will be thankful to them. This is because some types of corruption are transferred from one place to another.

2.6 The standard-bearers of defending justice and the oppressed

If religion plays a role in the arena of defending justice and the oppressed people, religion will be able to attract people to a great extent. In all parts of the world, young people are delighted to see movements seeking justice.

Justice is a part of all religions. The greatest heroes of humanity on the path of justice are religious heroes. Jesus Christ made efforts throughout his life to administer justice. The Prophet of Islam also made efforts to administer justice all through his life.

When Christianity was at its early stages, the great figures of Christianity made great sacrifices in order to promote justice. Religious books – the Bible, the Gospel, and the Holy Quran – are full of messages that encourage people to seek and administer justice.

If such issues become the slogans of the clergy – whether Christian or Muslim – they will certainly attract a great deal of attention. And the Jewish people who believe in the Bible are also after the administration of justice. Of course, I do not mean the Zionists, because they do not believe in anything.

2.7 Connection with God, a necessity in human life

Humanity cannot have a life that has no connection with God. An example of this is the world of communism. When the proponents of Marxism lost their power in the former Soviet Union, many people started to go to church.

The communists thought that if they ease the pressure they were exerting on the people, the people themselves would no longer go to church as a result of their 70 years of anti-religious propaganda. That was the mistake they made.

After the passage of 70 years, people started going to church once again. If you take a trip to Russia or the countries of Eastern Europe, you will see that there are a lot of people who go to church. In fact, the uprising of the people of Poland against the proponents of Marxism was an uprising to support

religion and Christianity.

2.8 Morality, a common point in all divine religions

Although there are differences among the different divine religions, there are common points in these religions as well. The most important common point among religions is the attention they pay to the issue of morality. This was the first message that the divine religions carried for humanity. Divine religions helped people understand that they should not be limited to what they can see, hear, and touch.

They made people understand that there is a reality that is much greater than all they can see and touch.

Today the existence of spirituality is a tangible reality in the world. However, the dominant movement in the world is heading in the opposite direction. If those who follow divine religions manage to reduce this unawareness even to a small extent, they will have done humanity a great favor. This is the common point between Islam and Christianity. Dialogue with religious scholars of different religions is mostly focused on this point.

Divine religions did not try to stop people from making materialistic efforts. Rather, they tried to make them understand that these efforts can be steered towards achieving a moral position. Therefore, they led their hearts towards a brilliant reality.

Being unaware of this reality will be a disadvantage for humanity, and such a disadvantage is not comparable with any other loss. Today humanity is greatly suffering from such unawareness. In fact, the widespread materialism of the world has made humanity completely unaware.

2.9 Conflict between Islam and Christianity

There is no conflict between Islam and Christianity, and there will be no conflict between them in the future either. There is no Muslim-Christian conflict, and I would say that there are more conflicts between Christian governments than there are between Muslim and Christian governments. Of course

belligerent attitudes do exist in the world.

During the past 70 years, two wars have taken place in the Christian world, and these wars have had an effect on Muslims, too. The Islamic Republic of Iran invites all Muslims to unity. And such unity is not against the followers of Christianity or other religions. Rather, the purpose of this unity is to oppose those who violate others' rights, occupy other countries, and cause war. Its primary purposes are to promote morality, rationality, and Islamic justice, to achieve scientific and economic progress, and to restore Islamic grandeur.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is reminding the world of the fact that when Quds, i.e., the holy city of Jerusalem, was under the control of Muslims at the time of the Righteous Caliphs, the Christian and Jewish peoples enjoyed complete peace and security. But now that Quds and other centers are under the control of Zionists, how is it that they consider killing Muslims as *mubah* (permissible according to their beliefs)?

2.10 The religion of mercy and kindness

Islam does not oppose other religions. When Islam was dominant in non-Muslim regions, the followers of other religions were thankful for the mercy that Islam showed towards them. They said that Muslims were kinder towards them than their previous rulers. In the Levant region, when Muslims who had been victorious in the war entered the region, the Jewish and Christian people who lived there said that Muslims were kind towards them. Muslims were kind towards the people. Islam is the religion of mercy and kindness. It is a blessing for all people. Islam tells the followers of Christianity: "Come to an equitable word between us and you." [The Holy Quran, 3: 64] Islam focuses on the common points between the two religions. Islam is not opposed to other nations and religions. It is opposed to bullying, oppression, arrogance, and domineering motives. The oppressive, domineering, and arrogant powers try to stand this reality on its head in the world. In order to achieve this goal, they make use of all their tools – from Hollywood to propaganda machines, to weapons, and to military forces.

3.0 Christianity in the modern era

3.1 Jesus Christ

If Jesus Christ were among us today, he would not miss a single moment to fight against the ringleaders of oppression and arrogance. He would not tolerate the hunger and helplessness of millions of people who are being led towards war and corruption by the superpowers of the world.

3.2 Paving the way for colonialism

One of the most fundamental policies of colonialism, the arrogant powers, and their mercenaries has been to purge people's hearts of hope and the desire to resist. They have tried to put out this light several times, but have so far failed to achieve their goal.

Colonialism and the arrogant powers have made numerous efforts, not only in Iran, but also throughout the Muslim world, in order to achieve this goal. In an important report that was released years ago, the efforts of Christian missionaries who went from Europe to North Africa in order to prepare the way for colonialism were described.

There were some priests who stayed in some parts of Africa and in remote places for years. Why did they do that? Why were they trying to convert African tribes to Christianity? Everyone knows that they were the mercenaries of colonialism. They went there to convert those people to Christianity so that colonialism could have an influence there and achieve its goals.

And those priests knew what goal they were pursuing. It was not the case that they did not know what they were doing. Just consider the hardships that they endured in order to achieve this goal – hardships which cannot be compensated for with money. They lived for seven years in an area that was close to where cannibals lived. These are the things about which we sometimes read in books or reports.

One of the main concerns of the followers of different religions throughout the world is that the powers that are dominant in Christian countries promote Christianity in the

world as a tool for advancing the goals of colonialism in the world. They are in fact paving the way for colonialism.

They sent different groups that were apparently trying to promote and clarify the principles of Christianity to different parts of the world. But their main purpose was to pave the way for the colonial powers, which were then dominant in Europe, to enter Islamic countries and gain political power in those countries. Unfortunately, they succeeded in achieving their goals in many places.

3.3 An end to religious knowledge and a beginning to scientific knowledge

In the Christian parts of Europe, the beginning of the movement to gain scientific knowledge coincided with an end to acquiring religious knowledge. In other words, the beginning of this phase meant an end to gaining religious knowledge. Maybe this was the right thing to do because religious knowledge in the Christian context was full of superstitions and bias and was totally opposed to the acquisition of scientific knowledge.

A long time ago in Europe, a scientist would be sent to prison, whipped, or burnt to death because of making a scientific discovery. For many years, they would burn scientists because they thought they were magicians. These events have been reflected in the literary works of the west as well in the history of western science. When the religious atmosphere of society and those who are in charge of a society's religious affairs have such an attitude towards scientific knowledge, it is natural that religion and religious knowledge would be totally eradicated if such knowledge could find itself a place in society. This is a very clear fact.

Of course the type of religion that the intellectuals of Europe were opposed to was not suitable for humanity. It was a type of religion that was full of superstitions – the same religion that sentenced Galileo to death and tortured other people to death because they had made a scientific discovery. That was not true Christianity. Rather, the principles had been distorted. The problem was not that those principles were put

aside. Rather, the problem was that morality and ethics were separated from knowledge and politics as well as lifestyles and the individual and social interactions of people.

3.4 Those who do not believe in Christianity

No one should have any doubts that religious prejudice, which has been hidden under the deceptive slogans of democracy and human rights, has assumed control over the majority of western powers.

It would be very naïve to think that the hostile motives in Bosnia--the crimes committed by paramilitary forces in Bosnia against the Muslims of that country--are rooted in the principles of Christianity.

Those who are utterly opposed to all manifestations of Islam and movements of Muslims do not believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ and Christianity either. They only believe in their uncontrollable power and their interests, materialistic desires. And, whoever poses a threat against their power, they will oppress. But their bloody hands have nowadays pitted Christianity against Islam, and they have raised the flag of enmity towards Islam and its principles.

3.5 Opposing morality

In a world with such materialistic tendencies, the Islamic Republic of Iran was established on the basis of morality. This is the important point. Even whether such a system should be an Islamic or a Christian system is of secondary importance. The important fact is to put an end to the immorality and lack of belief in religious principles that underlie all movements in the world, even the movements of the world's religious scholars.

Even the religious scholars of the world were moving towards a lack of belief in religious principles. For instance, they plan services in a way to attract young people, even if it means they have to organize dancing programs under the supervision of churches! Can a Christian imagine that those in charge of churches would ever do such a thing?

One of the famous authors of the Arab world wrote: "One night, I saw with my own eyes that a priest took part in a dancing ceremony which was held under the supervision of the church. Young couples were dancing there. He just took a look to see if everything was in order. Apparently, the lighting was a bit too strong. He adjusted the lighting system with his own hands so that the degree of lighting on the stage would be less strong. After everyone had left, he ordered the janitor to close all the doors. Then he went to his room to rest."

The Arab author then continues: "It was the following day or two days after that when I went to see the priest. I said: Father! Apparently things have changed. And he said "no." We have adopted the right policy to attract young people to the church. You probably saw how many people had come to church!" This means a tendency towards immorality even in the world of religious figures. That priest was a Christian cleric. People like that priest can be found among Sunni or Shia clergymen too.

In such an atmosphere and at this stage of history, an event took place that helped establish a system on the basis of morality. This system has brought spirituality into the lives of people, and everything—including government, war, budget, and policies—is rooted in morality. It is possible to say that the existence of such a system has been unprecedented in the world, except for a limited period of time. Of course religious rule, in its particular sense, has always existed in some parts of the world – especially in the Christian world. But the Islamic Republic of Iran is not a system that is similar to those types of rule. In fact, those rules were the rule of faithful people and clergymen over people, not the rule of religious and moral principles over them.

3.6 Indifference towards injustice in the world

Today, Christian leaders are indifferent to the most important issues of humans. Today, there is injustice across the world. What are the Christian leaders doing to oppose injustice? They claim to support peace. The slogan of peace is indeed a good

slogan for humanity, but it is not sufficient. Besides the slogan of peace, there should be the slogan of justice, too. Today, humanity is suffering from the lack of justice. There are great powers that are oppressing nations and the majority of people in the world.

European countries themselves started great wars and then started to shout slogans of peace. It has been many years since those wars have been finished, but they make an instrumental use of the slogan of peace while it is the slogan of justice which humanity needs. But they never speak of justice, and the Christian leaders and the Pope are just watching indifferently.

The Islamic Republic of Iran does not by any means approve of the stance of the heads of churches towards the west and western arrogance. They shoulder a much heavier duty. I sent a message to the Pope and asked him to emphasize the importance of justice. Today, the message of all religions is administration of justice, and the main slogan and message of Moses, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) was also the administration of justice.

3.7 The result of not following the teachings of Jesus Christ

As compared to European people, Americans have got a stronger tendency towards religion, religious names, religious ceremonies, and churches. But their understanding of religion is pretty general, superficial, and one-sided.

From their perspective, there is no contradiction between believing in Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary and committing sins that they have been told not to commit in Christianity. There is no logic behind their beliefs.

Christianity – as has been said – is based on kindness and peace. But as you can see, most wars, crimes, murders, and examples of unkindness and moral impurity happen in the west. Yet, they believe in Christianity, too! It is clear that what they do is based on separation from religious principles. The fact that the age of those who are addicted is constantly

becoming lower and lower – once it was 18, then 15, and now it is 13 – and that the rate of crime, immorality, and lack of attention to family, family members, and traditions is constantly increased are the results of the gap that is being developed between the people and religious principles.

We can think of a group of humans who have access to atomic power but do not make any destructive or fatal uses of such power. If those who possess such power believed in moral and religious principles, such a state of affairs could be expected. But, unfortunately, they did not believe in such principles, and you can see what happened to nations as a result. It was almost 50 years ago when atomic bombs were first made. But for those who are aware, fear of atomic bombs still exists in the world, and such fear will not only not decrease, but will increase in the future.

Some time ago, one of the Christian institutions released statistics about the number of Christian people who had been killed in the past century. The statistics revealed that the number of Christians who had been killed in the past century was more than in any other time in the history of Christianity. I was eager to ask those who had prepared the statistics who had killed those Christians? Was it Muslims who killed them?

Was it Buddhists who killed them? Or did Christians, themselves, kill them? Who killed European people during the first and second world wars? It was Christians, themselves, who killed other Christians. It was the people of Europe and the west who killed many Christian as well as non-Christian and non-European people.

Lack of morality will bring about such grave and harmful effects for humanity. The Islamic Republic of Iran intends to introduce an exemplary generation to the world – a generation that will prove to the world that it is possible to acquire knowledge and benefit from the divine blessings, which exist in the world and inside humans themselves, and adhere to moral and ethical principles at the same time.

3.8 A false claim

Today, many of those who claim to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ are treading a path other than the one set by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ led humans to worship God and oppose pharaohs and transgressors. Today, there are people who claim to be the followers of that great prophet, but who have taken the place of the pharaohs and *tāghūt* whom Jesus Christ used to oppose during his time.

The powers of the world speak of Christianity and claim to believe in Christianity. But there is no trace of Christianity as a divine religion in the current political system that is dominant in the world of arrogance – which is the world of oppression, arrogance in the true sense of the word, and violating people's rights, a world in which they make use of their knowledge in order to commit crimes.

Today, knowledge is in the possession of those who know nothing of humanity. Knowledge and technology are used to advance goals which are completely harmful to the human community and which are only to the benefit of capitalists and powerful people.

4.0 The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Christian Minority

4.1 The influence of the Islamic Revolution on the Christian world

Our Revolution not only made Muslims think of Islam, but also had useful consequences for Christians, too. Countries that had moved away from their own religion – Christianity – came back to the path of morality and religion. This was the beginning of the downfall of the Eastern emperor and the collapse of Marxism in the world. This was a strange event with many great aspects.

The exceptional position of the Islamic Republic in the world is because it has been established in a world where the power of the materialistic powers lies in the hands of those

who have materialistic tendencies and do not believe in ethical, religious, and moral principles.

4.2 Peaceful coexistence of followers of different faiths in Iran

Thankfully, the followers of many different faiths live together peacefully in the Islamic Republic. Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians live alongside Muslims in the Islamic Republic. They cooperate with the Islamic Republic and play a role in the country. Of course they shoulder certain duties. The Islamic Republic also shoulders certain duties towards them, as Iranian citizens, which it fulfills. The Islamic Republic has no complaints against its citizens who are among the religious minorities of the country. When enemies launch propaganda against the Islamic Republic in a sly manner, Jewish citizens publish statements. In other cases, Armenians or other religious minorities have issued statements and expressed their support for the Islamic Republic. This is a source of honor for the Islamic Republic.

4.3 Feeling of kindness and closeness

I have a feeling of kindness towards the Armenian people who live in Iran, and I feel very close to them. I like Christian people. The Armenian people helped us a lot during the Revolution and the imposed war. Of course, you may have only heard about these things, but I have seen these things myself. I saw many Armenians on battlefields who honestly and sincerely helped us under the bombardment of the enemies. Of course these Armenians were not soldiers. They had voluntarily come to the battlefields.

We treat religious minorities like our own brothers and have a friendly attitude towards them. It is not important for us that a certain person is the follower of another religion and, consequently, does not believe in our religion and has different thoughts. I even go to their houses. It has been many years that I have been going to the house of Christian martyrs on the occasion of the new Christian year. The person may be an

Assyrian or an Armenian, but I go to their houses.

4.4 Fellow Countrymen

This is the text of the Supreme Leader's speech in a meeting with the grand bishop of the Armenians and the Armenian MPs in the Iranian Majlis.

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

I am happy to see that our fellow Christian countrymen feel comfortable and happy in our country. I am also happy to see that they are living and working alongside their fellow countrymen in our country. This is what we are after. We intend to create an atmosphere in which religious minorities of our country – Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians – feel secure and comfortable and enjoy all their civil rights. Thankfully, this goal has been achieved, and you can see the results.

I am thankful and happy to see that you dear friends feel sad because of the earthquake <that> happened in Bam. This is what I naturally expected. During the 8-year imposed war, the Armenians who lived in Iran played an important role by providing technical support. Armenians who live in Tehran and other parts of the country are very skillful at doing technical work.

I was familiar with the work of Armenians prior to the Revolution and knew that they are very skillful in the field of automobile and auto parts. During the war, they came to me and said that they were ready to cooperate with us. They established a camp in Ahvaz in the year 1359 or 1360. I visited their camp. Once, I was traveling from Tehran to Ahvaz when I saw that there were some 100 Armenians who were saying that they were ready to go to the battlefields. They were asking to be sent to the battlefields.

I ordered the people in charge to send them to the battlefields by plane. Therefore, it is not surprising for me to see that you expressed your sadness over the Bam earthquake. Of course, I have a close connection with some Armenian and Assyrian families in Tehran because their children were

martyred during the war. I went to their houses, and I am familiar with them. I know that they have strong emotions.

I hope God will help you and me to move on the right path. I hope God will bestow His blessings, mercy, and guidance on us all. I extend my congratulations to our Armenian friends on the occasion of the new Christian year and the birthday anniversary of Jesus Christ

Private Ownership in Islam

1.0 Economic freedom in Islam

In Islamic communities, people are free to engage in economic activities, but not in the absolute sense of the word. There are limits and restrictions. After all, any free activity is somehow confined. These restrictions and limits have been defined in a particular way in Islam. Similarly, in socialist societies there are certain restrictions on ownership of wealth and possessions, which are different from Islamic restrictions. It would be appropriate to suggest that Islam's view of economic freedom is as inconsistent with the communist and Marxist view of economic freedom as it is with the school of capitalism that is currently the dominant paradigm in the west. What is being practiced in the west is not acceptable in Islam. Capitalism, in the western sense of the word, is by no means endorsed by Islam. On the contrary, confronting capitalism is a recurring theme in numerous Islamic rulings. The paradigm of Islamic economics cannot be found in western capitalism and the existing types of capitalism in the world. In Islamic communities, the limits on free economic activities are the same restrictions that have been specified for *ḥarām* business and appropriation in *fiqh* books – that is, business activities that involve usury and cheating, result from ignorance and speculation, and are based on unlawful earnings. Such rules have been specified in Islam. These are the restrictions on business deals and free economic activities in Islamic societies.

It is *ḥarām* to trade in certain goods. For example, it is *ḥarām* to trade in wine and other such items that have been declared *ḥarām* and unclean, except in rare cases specified in Islam. Similarly, except in rare cases, it is *ḥarām* for individuals and the private sector to trade in goods that are not subject to private ownership and belong to the Islamic government – such as the booty obtained from infidels. There are other such rules clearly explained in Islamic *fiqh* that have specified

whether and to what extent a certain economic activity is lawful or unlawful, even when state laws do not restrict the activity.

Economic freedom in an Islamic society necessitates that the Islamic government adopt policies and pass laws that enable all members of the Islamic society to engage in free economic activities. This is one of the characteristics that distinguish the Islamic economic system from western economic systems. In order to create genuine economic freedom in society, the monopoly of capitalism has to be prevented. The ground should be prepared for the majority of the people or all individuals capable of economic activities to benefit from the available natural resources.

The Commander of the Faithful said, "I have never seen bountiful wealth anywhere without trampled rights beside it." This tradition has a precise and sublime meaning. Some people falsely think this tradition means that bountiful wealth is the result of stealing from other people and appropriating what belongs to them, and that there are always some poor people around a wealthy usurper. They argue that the tradition is problematic. They reason that they know some wealthy people who have not obtained their wealth through stealing and usurping what belongs to other people. They reason that the wealthy people they know have gained their wealth through their own efforts.

That is rooted in a misunderstanding of the tradition. The tradition means that wherever there is bountiful wealth, there will be great wealth and facilities. Wealth gives its owners the opportunity to obtain more wealth, thereby taking this opportunity away from other people. Those who have a large capital in society are more capable of generating wealth. Such people are better able than poor people to take advantage of the dormant wealth that belongs to all members of their society. Therefore, those who enjoy bountiful wealth, have more opportunities, have more access to facilities, and are free to engage in economic activities. The laws are formulated with the interests of these wealthy people in mind. As a result, the majority of the people – that is, those who do not have any wealth – lose the opportunity to generate wealth.

The meaning of the tradition is right, regardless of whether or not it was really said by Imam Ali (a.s.). Therefore, giving economic freedom only to those who have the wealth to make use of their freedom is not an appropriate way to promote free economic activities in an Islamic society. Rather, in addition to allowing financially capable individuals to engage in economic activities, the laws and conditions of an Islamic society and the quality of its interactions must be such that all people – that is to say, all those who are capable of engaging in economic activities – are enabled to engage in free economic activities and benefit from their activities.

2.0 The limits of private ownership in Islam

Private ownership is respected in Islam, but it has also been restricted. Restrictions do not mean that private ownership has been specified in rials, dollars, dinars, or dirhams. The value of these currencies does not remain the same. Private ownership is limited in order to stop it from causing losses. According to the law, if private ownership causes losses for the Islamic *Ummah* or a group of Muslims, this ownership will have to be restricted so that it does not cause any losses.

Private ownership is respected in Islam as long as it does not lead to speculation, exploitation, discrimination, disrespect to humans, and extremism on the part of the rich. Private ownership is respected as long as it does not cause the rich to feel superior. It is the negative results of private ownership that are considered to be bad, not private ownership itself. Therefore, these are the factors that define the limits. Islam has prevented these side effects. It has condemned lavish people and has rejected wastefulness. It has allowed the rulers of Islamic communities to prevent wastefulness, exploitation, discrimination, speculation, and extremism. Therefore, the rulers of Islamic communities and the heads of Islamic governments have been given the opportunity to prevent extremism through their decrees.

The Islamic Republic does not prohibit private ownership or economic efforts and activities of individuals. In the

meantime, society gradually progresses towards the welfare of the needy. In free Islamic economics, economic freedom requires that the people bear the burden of economic responsibilities of society.

3.0 Charitable donation in the Islamic economic system

In an Islamic country, people are entitled to engage in free economic activities and they are not considered government employees. All people are allowed to work for themselves and make money. As a result, it is the people who remedy the financial and economic shortcomings of an Islamic society. That is what charitable donation means. The Quranic term, charitable donation <ṣakāṭ>, is the result of this kind of economic activities in society. If it is the people who make money, then they are the ones who should remedy the shortcomings. Charitable donation is the eliminating of these shortcomings.

Charitable donation is an Islamic principle. Charitable donation and managing the economic affairs of society lie on the shoulders of the people, and it is the people who are directly responsible for eliminating the economic shortcomings. If something happens in an Islamic society and the government suddenly confronts a financial problem, this financial need has to be addressed by the people. If a war or epidemic breaks out in society or when an emergency comes up, according to Islam, the people must contribute as much as they can to address the problem. Of course since not all people are at the same level, those who are better off should take on a greater portion of the responsibility.

From an Islamic point of view, accumulation of wealth and avoiding charitable donation goes against the values and is considered a sin, and maybe a major sin. Just because a person is working with *ḥalāl* capital does not give him the permission to accumulate wealth through legitimate activities and refuse to spend it for the sake of God and public interests while other people in his society are in need of his wealth. Charitable donation is a principle in Islam. People must spend

their money for the sake of God. It is not forbidden to engage in business deals and accumulate wealth. On the contrary, people are encouraged to generate wealth, but they are also required to spend it for the sake of God. Islam teaches people to use what they earn to live an ordinary, or even somewhat comfortable, life. But they should spend their excess money to promote public interests of their society. Islam has expressed its contempt for those who earn a lot of money and then spend all of it in an extravagant way to buy expensive meals, clothes, cars, and houses or simply accumulate wealth without spending it. From an Islamic point of view, avoiding charitable donation is a hideous act, and if it is accompanied by accumulation of wealth, that wealth is *ḥarām*.

Allah asserts in the Quran, "Surely Allah loves not those who are proud and boastful, who are miserly, and who bid people to be misers." This stinginess does not mean that they refuse to give away what they are required to donate according to the rules of *shari'a*. Rather, it means that they should donate more than what has been specified in *shari'a*. If the Muslim community is in need of their wealth, they should donate more than what has been specified in Islamic *shari'a*.

Some people have obtained their wealth by using public funds of society, through legitimate ways. It is not acceptable if these people keep their wealth for themselves, while society is in need of their wealth. Such an action cannot be justified from an Islamic point of view. On the contrary, what Islam stipulates is the polar opposite of this. There is a Quranic verse that says, "And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement." Maybe gold and silver have been mentioned as examples. Maybe the chastisement that applies to "those who hoard up silver and gold" applies equally to those who hoard up their money, wealth, and capital and fail to donate their money for the sake of Allah while their society is in desperate need of their wealth. The verse continues saying, "Announce to them a painful chastisement." If hoarding up silver and gold is not a major sin, why do they have to suffer from a painful chastisement? The Quran tells them to wait for a painful chas-

tisement. This chastisement could be the natural result of their bad actions in this world, which will not of course afflict them alone and will harm all members of their society. This chastisement could also be an affliction in the hereafter. Probably, the chastisement is a combination of both types of affliction – that is to say, their action will result in painful chastisement both in this world and in the hereafter. Therefore, donation is necessary and obligatory.

4.0 Using the private sector in labor and production

The private sector must be encouraged to step into the arena of labor and production. A large proportion of the production companies of the country is owned by the government. Of course some of the organizations that have been specified in the Constitution should remain under the control of the government. Nevertheless, these organizations are few in number. The concentration of organizations in the public sector is due to mismanagement. The private sector must be the pioneer of labor and production in the country – except in the case of particular organizations specified in the Constitution that have to be managed by the government. Of course it should be clear that privatization does not mean transferring the functions of the public sector to the private sector without paying attention to the price, the policies, the interests of the country, and how this transfer will be carried out. Rather, investors have to be encouraged to step into the arena, and the resources have to be distributed in such a way that the private sector is encouraged to invest. This process has to be carried out carefully. The organizations that are going to be privatized should be selected appropriately. And they should investigate whether a particular organization is appropriate for privatization or whether it is capable of increasing its production after being privatized. If the organization has the capacity for privatization, it should be given the necessary means. Therefore, selection should be based on qualifications, not on friendship or political connections. If these factors are taken into account, the private sector will undoubtedly be emboldened and will step into the arena.

5.0 Supervising and channeling economic freedom

All types of freedom in an Islamic society must be channeled and supervised by the ruler of the Islamic community. What is the purpose of this supervision? This supervision is to ensure that economic freedom will not lead to corruption and will not restrict others' freedom. It is the same with freedom of expression, political freedom, and cultural freedom. Undoubtedly, from an Islamic point of view, it is not right to interpret economic freedom as freedom for those who are capable of economic activities to produce what they want and deliver, sell, or consume their products with no restraints. Islam has determined that economic freedom and private ownership – which it has bestowed on all members the Islamic community as a right – should be accompanied by close governmental supervision over all economic activities. That is to say, the government must be careful so that some people do not misuse this economic freedom.

Even when consuming a product, one should take care not to be wasteful. Of course limited extravagance is just a personal sin. If something is used wastefully in a house, this constitutes a sin and it is *ḥarām*. But it is the Islamic government's responsibility to stand up to this extravagance if this *ḥarām* action is so serious that it threatens the economic system of the Islamic society, increases poverty, prepares the ground for the deprivation of a large proportion of the society, and destroys the products that have been produced with a lot of effort.

Of course this Islamic view is not confined within the borders of the Islamic community. It applies to the world at large. The countries that are currently exploiting extravagance in foodstuffs should be stopped if the global economic system is fair and if there are powerful international organizations. Some wealthy countries consume nearly 70 percent of the world's foodstuffs while their people constitute only 35 or 36 percent of the world population. They have to be stopped if there are some organizations and moral governments in the world that want to use their power to benefit humanity and

nations across the world.

Therefore, free economic activities and personal ownership in Islam do not mean that people are entitled to spend as much as they like if their extravagance causes some people to become ill or starve to death or if their extravagance deprives other people of the necessities of life. This is not acceptable from an Islamic point of view, and it is forbidden.

6.0 Free economy and the political fate of society

In Islam, free economic activities are never allowed to transgress on the political fate of society or disrupt the political structure of society. Capitalism is currently in full swing in western countries. Major capitalists are in fact the managers of the political systems of advanced countries and the ones acting behind the scenes. Of course some of these capitalists make their way into the government as well. The current systems of the world – like the American system as well as other systems – are a case in point. Some politicians in the government are themselves capitalists. Some of them are the major stakeholders of big oil and non-oil companies. Or they may not be in the government, but they control the elections behind the scenes. Presidents are determined with their help. They have control over the promotion or demotion of figures in the political arenas. The laws that are passed are in line with their interests and opinions. The western world should be described as a world of “capitocracy” or plutocracy. Capitalism may not be an exact description of this system. “Capitocracy” and domination of companies and capitalists over social affairs are the distinctive characteristics of the western capitalist world. This is unacceptable from an Islamic point of view, and anything that may lead to this state of affairs should be prevented.

7.0 The meaning of capitalism in current orthodoxy of the world

Capitalism means using the capital that has been accumulated through exploiting people. That is to say, capital is the means

of exploitation. Capital only enables its owner to exploit other people. Exploiting other people is a kind of oppression, and oppression is *ḥarām*. Therefore, this type of capitalism has no place in Islam. That is the meaning of capitalism in the current orthodoxy of the world. If private ownership causes corruption, oppression, and discrimination, state ownership may also lead to the same results. Even in the countries where ownership is the government's prerogative, there is another type of corruption, oppression, and discrimination among another group of people.

8.0 Economic freedom in western capitalism

In western economic systems, although people are free to engage in economic activities, at least according to their laws or claims, this freedom does not in fact belong to all people. Natural resources are not easily accessible to people from different social backgrounds. Not everyone can benefit from these natural resources when they focus their efforts on using them. Rather, those who are truly free are the ones who have great amounts of wealth and who have control over the economic and political policies of society. And these people make it difficult for the entire society to make use of these resources. Therefore, like most of the third world countries, in capitalist societies – both advanced and backward capitalist societies – the majority of the people are living in abject poverty. While large groups of people are suffering from abject poverty, unemployment, deprivation, and housing shortages, a limited number of people freely engage in economic activities and accumulate wealth. These few people increase the number of their mines, companies, and properties. All natural resources are in fact exploited by a small portion of society. Other people, including retailers and laborers, only use a negligible part of the society's vast wealth. These retailers and laborers do not have the opportunity to engage in production, constructive work, and genuine production of wealth.

9.0 Economics in socialist countries

In socialism and schools of thought originating from Marxism, there are some restrictions on private ownership, but those restrictions are different from Islamic limits. For example, it is forbidden there to own any means of production. That is to say, no one is allowed to own such things as land and companies that can be used to produce something. In Marxism and socialist economics, trading is prohibited and is considered to go against the values. In these schools of thought, it is forbidden to buy something for oneself or for someone who has a capital, no matter whether the capital is small or substantial. In Marxism, buying and selling are considered a kind of unpleasant and unacceptable brokerage.

In socialist countries and in countries where the government is in charge of everything – that is, all means of generating wealth, all companies, and all land – and where the people are the employees of the government, we should not expect anything from the people in case of war or other emergencies.

An Address to University Students

(The address made by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution at the graduation ceremony of the students of Tarbiat Modarres University on Sept 3, 1998)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful:

This is, for me, a pleasant day. Of course, I had visited your university frequently during the terms of my presidency. But the present occasion has certain aspects that, in my mind, will turn it into a sweet, lasting memory. A few months ago, when I was informed of this student gathering, it was perhaps expected, by the honored chancellor, that I would send a message about this occasion or the students would come to have a meeting with me, but I had made up my mind, from the very first moment, to attend this graduation ceremony and to personally witness the valuable output of this young university's activities for the past several years.

This university was founded on great expectations and aspirations. Obviously, our Revolution, our system, and the progress we have made, are all indebted to our universities for the services they have rendered to science and culture. Yet this university was a product of the Revolution that was to grow and provide the academic brains and competent university teachers trained after the victory of our Islamic Revolution.

Perhaps today, when, thanks be to God, our universities have produced numerous faithful and revolutionary graduates, the importance of what I say will not be fully appreciated by many, but it was most meaningful in the first decade of the Revolution. The days when some university lecturers did not like to come and teach, some were not eager to cooperate with the Revolutionary movement, some had traveled abroad, and there were others who were not welcomed by the students who often came to us and complained about their professor's lack of sympathy and devotion, and surely there were others who did continue their work faithfully and devotedly. All this meant

that, for the improvement and expansion of our universities, we had to come up with some fundamental initiatives; one such idea was the foundation of this new university. And today, when I look around and see several thousand students, young women and young men, graduating from this university, attending this ceremony, I am sure that this will be for me a lasting and most pleasant memory.

Dear sisters and brothers! There is one thing I should emphasize to you in this regard: The university generation today bears a special, weighty responsibility. Today, your country, your revolution and your honorable Islamic order are going through a phase which needs the cooperation of all responsible and able hands to enrich our system and our ideas; we have already left behind us some tough times, like the war period. Those were times of great hardships.

Today it is time to do away with all the backwardness imposed on us during the long period of despotic rule in our country, through knowledge, science and scientific efforts. We must make up for those periods in our history when talents were not allowed to blossom, when the true and genuine identity of this nation could not be demonstrated. As a result of the importation of industrial commodities--themselves products of scientific and industrial progress in the West--we came to be dependent on the West in every field. And they also exported to us their intellectual and cultural goods. Their first and foremost attempt was to alienate our educated sections from their own selves, from their own culture, from their own customs and traditions, from their own knowledge and science, and from confidence in the abilities and talents inherent in the Iranian nation. Of course, this lack of belief and confidence in ourselves did have its own adverse consequences.

Clearly it took a long time from the moment that this idea of humiliating the Iranian people entered our country until it took root in the thoughts and minds of the elite strata in this country and for the West to reap its fruits. But, in the long run, they were successful, and the final consequences of this alienation and humiliation are the concrete examples of backwardness that we witness today in this country despite our

human resources, despite our great material wealth, despite our singular geographical position, despite all the glittering backgrounds of scientific and cultural greatness, and our great heritage of scientific treasures! Yes, despite all those brilliant factors, our present status in the fields of science, industry and various academic achievements, is not at all what it ought to be. Even in the areas of our history, literature and geography, much more research has been done by foreigners than by our own researchers; the genius of the Iranian people has not yet succeeded in removing the existing backwardness. Certainly since the inception of the Revolution, we have witnessed a miracle: that feeling of helplessness has been replaced by an unshakable belief in ourselves, but we must still work on it.

In the early years of the revolution, and especially during the eight years of the war imposed on us, we were indeed facing numerous problems. But today, it is your undoubted duty to do your best, to struggle hard, and the aim of this struggle should be to elevate and glorify Islam and to make your Islamic Iran really independent in every respect. Obviously by this, we do not mean that we should close our borders and block the entrance of beneficial goods; this is surely not wise, and nobody is inviting you to do that. In the course of history, every human being has benefited from the achievements of others, but there is a clear distinction, for the exchange of ideas and material things, between two equals and the humiliated begging of one from an arrogant donor, and this is how things were, more or less, before the Revolution.

You must take your country to the needed higher level. This is the great mission of the enlightened, educated, young generation of this country, and you, brothers and sisters who have studied at this university, have, in my opinion, a heavier task to fulfill than others and, God willing, you shall meet with greater success.

Today, I only meant to be among you, I did not intend to necessarily raise any issues for discussion. I was thinking of spending an hour or so with you, speaking with you and answering your questions; that would be most enjoyable and pleasant to me. Yet, there is an issue that is being currently

debated; it is a useful discussion under the present circumstances in our country, and for this reason, I shall briefly speak about a few points I have noted down.

This issue is the question of freedom, which, as I said, is being enthusiastically discussed today in the press and among thoughtful people in our country. This is a blessed phenomenon. For the principle and basic topics of the Revolution to be the objects of an exchange of ideas, and for many people to be persuaded to think about such matters, is something for which we always waited. Of course, many other related issues are being debated too.

Anyway, freedom is the point in question today. I have personally read and studied most of what is discussed or printed, and some of it I have found to be quite useful. Various opposing ideas are being expressed, by which I mean ideas that are not following a certain line; they often oppose one another, and on both sides of the opposing views you find many correct and truthful conceptions. It is good to continue such trends, and I do hope that our scholars and specialists will be urged to engage in the provision of more instructive and thought provoking discussions for the benefit of the public. I have often encouraged you to further deepen the culture of the Revolution; attaining to new depths will require such debates.

There are two points, however, to which special attention should be paid. The first is this: in any discussion of the issue of freedom, the concept of independence, which has been one of the three mottoes of the Revolution, must not be overlooked. Not only that, but it must be seriously taken into account. This means we must think independently; we must not follow a submissive and imitative mode of thinking. If we were to imitate others in this issue, which is a cornerstone of our progress, and if we only looked in the direction of the ideas coming from the West, we would be making a big mistake, and bitter consequences would await us.

First of all, I would like to mention that the issue of freedom is one of the categories that are frequently emphasized in the Holy Qur'an and in the traditions of the Imams (AS). Certainly our understanding of freedom is not that of absolute

freedom, which, I do not think, has any adherents in the world. I mean, I do not think there is anybody in the world inviting people to absolute freedom. Neither is our understanding of freedom a spiritual one, which does exist in Islam and throughout our sublime Islamic literature; no, that is not the question either. Spiritual freedom is something believed in and approved by all the faithful and we are not to debate it. The sort of freedom under discussion is in fact social freedom, that is, freedom as a human right, freedoms of speech, thought, choice and the like.

This interpretation of freedom has been lauded in the Quran and in the Sunna. Āyah 157 of the Sūra Al-A'rāf says: "To those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own Scriptures, in the Taurat and the Gospel, for he commands them what is just and proper and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good and pure, and prohibits them what is bad and impure; he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them." God says this with regard to an important characteristic of the Prophet: he releases people from their burdens, that is, he relieves people from restrictions imposed on them; this has a vast, glorious meaning. If you look back at the religious or non-religious communities of those times, you shall see that this releasing from yokes and burdens means freeing people from innumerable obligations and covenants imposed on people, many sorts of superstitious, primitive, crooked and wrong ideas and beliefs, and unlimited social bonds and chains imposed on humanity at the hands of despotism, distortion and deceit.

The famous scholar, George Jordaq, author of the book *The Voice of Human Justice*, an investigation of Imam Ali's thoughts and manners, makes a comparison at some place between two statements uttered by Omar, the second caliph, and Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (AS). He says that in the region of Omar, some governors of the Islamic states, against whom certain complaints and reports of bad administration had been received, were in the caliph's presence and the caliph, being angry at them, addressed them

and uttered a lasting, memorable statement: "You have turned the people into slaves, but God created them as free men." The other statement, also quoted in *Nahj-al-Balāgha*, by 'Ali is: "Never be a bondsman to other men, for God has created you free." Now, George Jorda, as I said, compares the two statements and opines that 'Ali's statement is by far the more preferred one. He reasons in this manner: Omar is addressing governors who presumably did not value freedom and liberty, and freedom could not at all be guaranteed by them, because they were the very persons who, as Omar reproached, had brought the people into bondage. Omar is actually telling them, you have turned people into slaves, but you must give them freedom. This is, of course, one way of expression. On the other hand, 'Ali is addressing all the people, the masses being put in bondage, advising them that only they themselves could guarantee their human freedoms and liberties: "Do not be a slave of another, because God has created you free."

In both of these statements, there are two fundamental features, one of which is in agreement with the thesis that God has created you free, saying that freedom is an innate attribute of man. And I shall touch upon this point in a comparison between the Islamic and Western ways of thinking in this respect.

Of course today, I do not intend to enter into a detailed discussion of this subject. Perhaps, I will, if God wills, at some future occasion do that, as there is a lot to be said about the matter. Today, however, I shall only focus on the two points I mentioned, one of which is to think about freedom freely and independently.

As I said, social freedom, as defined today in the world's political lexicon, does in fact have a Quranic root. There is no need for us to turn to the 18th century liberalism in Europe and follow what Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill and others have said. We ourselves have a lot to say on this subject, logical and rational. And I shall tell you why it is that what the West says may not guide us to any straight path.

I advise you to treat the issue of freedom as an Islamic subject. There are two groups, in my opinion, who are actually

in league against the Islamization or nativization of the issue of freedom.

The first group consists of those who in their lectures or writings are incurably citing examples and illustrations by the philosophers of the West of the last two or three centuries and what they wrote on the question of freedom: so and so said this, such and such said that! These, of course, are supposed to be the gentlemen among this group, because they do mention the names of the philosophers from whom they quote. But there are also other "journalistic philosophizers" who copy from, say, what Mill has said, or narrate the opinions of some French, German or American philosopher, but never mention their names; they pretend what they are saying is indeed their own opinions! They simply cheat, but certainly they do help create the impression that all free thinking and the whole concept of social freedoms are ideas coming from the West, that they are Western gifts bestowed upon us!

The second group, ignorantly helping the first, consists of those who, as soon as freedom is mentioned, panic seizes them and they cry out in frustration: "our religion is lost, all is lost!" No, sir! Religion is the greatest harbinger of freedom, how could religion be lost? Rational and decent freedom is the greatest gift of religion to any community, to all nations; it is by the blessings of freedom that ideas grow and talents blossom. Tyranny is the adversary of talent; where there is tyranny, no talents bloom. Islam is for the enriching and nurturing of talents; great human resources must, like natural resources, be properly exploited to enable mankind to make the earth prosperous. This is impossible without freedom; it is impossible by despotic ordering and regimentation. Therefore, this second group, who fear freedom, is also in error. These two groups, let's call them the west-toxicated and the extremists, are actually without knowing <it>, in close cooperation to drive the concept of freedom out of the domain of religion! But this is not true: the concept of freedom is an Islamic conception.

I should, perhaps, add a note here: even the kind of freedom we have been discussing, that is, social freedom, is much more valued and respected here than in different

Western schools. Of course, Western liberalism has its diverse interpretations: the Renaissance concepts, liberal ideas fostered in France and in other European countries. They all grew and led to the French Revolution, and later, in a distorted form, were exploited during the Independence movement in the United States, leading to the American constitution. All these need a lot more time to go into, but, to put it in a nutshell, today we do have dozens of interpretations of liberalism, and there have been fresher ones in recent times. American ideologues or American-fostered theorists are most actively engaged in this field.

You must also know that many such thinkers are not themselves American, but they do write under the patronage of American institutions, especially on the subject of liberalism. Books may be written in Germany, France or Australia and published in New York, and in other forms and places, but they are commercial orders by Americans, and that is another story. Despite all those different interpretations, I would like to briefly explain to you that the idea of freedom in Islam is superior to them all.

The Western thinkers are always facing big problems in putting forth some philosophy for freedom. What is the philosophy of freedom? Why should man be free? You must put forward some sort of logic, reason or philosophical principle for it. To solve this problem, they resort to all sorts of things: utility, the common good, collective joy, individual pleasure and the like, or at its best, an item of civil rights. Well, all these claims may be refuted, and they are often engaged in these discussions in the West.

If you were to look at what has been said and printed in our own country in recent years on the subject of freedom or liberalism, you will also come across a good deal of time-consuming, useless arguments, very similar to those pronounced on the topic of freedom in the Middle Ages! One person claims something, another one refutes him, and the first defends his position, so on and so forth. It is really not bad entertainment for the intellectuals in the Third World! One intellectual becomes the proponent of one theory, another one

defends another theory, the third approves of the theory of the first, the fourth writes an explanation for the theory of the second, and the fifth publishes one of the theories in his own name.

As I was saying, the maximum theory of the West on the origin or the philosophy of freedom is that it is a human right. Well, what Islam has said is far superior to this. As you noticed in the tradition quoted, it is innate in the human existence, and clearly it is a right, but a sublime, superior right as the right to life and the right to live. I may not include the right to live in the same category as the right of voting or the right of having a decent housing, therefore, freedom is superior to other rights, and that is what Islam says about freedom.

Surely there are exceptions; this right may be suspended in certain cases. An example is the people's right to be alive. If a man kills another man, then there is the law of retaliation for him; when a person spreads corruption, he must be punished; the same is true in the case of freedom, yet these are the exceptions according to the Islamic outlook. Thus it would be absolutely wrong to imagine that the idea of social freedom was something bestowed upon us by the West, so much so that whenever some people mean to speak something nice and interesting on this subject, they would at once cite the name of a book written by somebody who sat down and wrote something in the atmosphere of the West. No, we must be independent thinkers; we must consult our own sources and authorities, our own Islamic references. A thinking man will obviously consult other people's thoughts for the purposes of explanation and clarification and for enlightening his mind, not for a parrot-like imitation. Were we to imitate, we would certainly incur a great loss.

What I notice in this conflict relating to ideas and the press, which is an auspicious phenomenon, as I said, is that many do not pay attention to this principle. Here I will mention two or three main points of difference between the Islamic and Western approaches to freedom. As I said, liberalism is the main source of all the viewpoints and tendencies relating to this approach. There might be some difference between

some of these viewpoints and tendencies in some regards, but together they make up liberalism.

In Western liberal thought, human freedom is a concept devoid of any such entity as religion or God. Hence they do not consider freedom to be something God-given. None of them says that freedom is something bestowed by God on man. They seek to find some other philosophical grounds and roots of freedom. They have suggested some philosophical foundations and sources and have offered various interpretations.

In Islam, freedom has a divine source, and this is, by itself, a fundamental difference, which is the source of other differences. Therefore, from the Islamic viewpoint any action injurious to freedom is hostile to a divine value. That is, it gives rise to a religious obligation in the opposing party. Such is not the case with the Western notion of freedom. Some social struggles that are waged for the sake of freedom do not have any logical justification on the basis of Western liberalism. For instance, one of the justifications which is offered is 'the common good' or 'good of the majority.' This is considered the origin of social freedom. But why should I risk my life for the sake of the good of the majority? There is no logical justification for this. Of course, seasonal and short-lived passions drive many to the battlefield. But whenever any of those who have struggled under the banner of such notions--if, in fact, any struggle has ever taken place under their banner--emerges from the passing passions of the arena of struggle, they would have doubts about their avowed goal: "Why should I get killed for its sake?"

Such is not the case in Islamic thought. The struggle for freedom is a duty, for it is for the sake of a Divine goal. If you see someone's life being threatened, it is your duty to help him. It is a religious duty, something which, if you fail to carry out, you will be guilty of a sin. The same is true of freedom. It is a duty to struggle for its sake.

Other differences originate from this basic difference. As truth and moral values are relative from the viewpoint of Western liberalism, freedom is unrestricted. Why? Because

someone who believes in certain moral values has no right to blame anyone who violates those values because it is possible that he does not believe in those values. Accordingly, there is no limit to freedom from a moral and spiritual viewpoint. As a result freedom is unrestricted. Why? Because there are no immutable truths. Because, in their opinion, truth and ethical values are relative.

In Islam, freedom is not such. In Islam there are incontrovertible and immutable values and an unchanging truth. Man's movement is towards that truth which consists of values and is value-generating and conducive to perfection. Accordingly, freedom is limited by those values. As to how these values are to be understood and attained is another matter. Some people may possibly make errors in understanding these values, and some may have the right approach. That is outside the scope of our discussion. In any case, freedom is limited by values and truth.

Social freedom is a great value in Islam. But if this social freedom is used for purposes detrimental to the invaluable spiritual or material interests of a nation, it is harmful. The Qur'an states: "Whoever slays anyone, barring retaliation for homicide or the guilt of spreading corruption on earth, it is as if he had slain all mankind." In the logic of the Qur'an, killing one human being unjustly is like killing all mankind. This is an amazing conception. Someone who murders a person is like someone who murders all humanity because his act is a violation of the sanctity of human life. But there are exceptions, which consist of the penalty for murder or for spreading corruption on earth. That is, someone who has violated another person's right to life or has spread corruption forfeits his own right to life. Immutable and definite values and truths limit one's social freedom in the same way as they limit his right to life.

Another difference is that in the West the limits of freedom consist of materialistic interests. Primarily they have set certain limits on social and individual freedoms, and this is one of them. When material interests, like the power and prestige of these countries and their scientific hegemony are endangered, they limit freedom. Education and the

dissemination of knowledge is one of the areas in which freedom is one of the most indubitable of human rights. Human beings have a right to learn, yet this freedom is limited in the major universities of the Western world. Science and high technology are prohibited to certain countries on the grounds that if this know-how is transferred it will go out of the monopoly of these powers, and their material power and domination will not remain as they are. Hence frontiers are imposed on freedom. That is, the teacher has no right to communicate certain scientific secrets, for instance, to a Third-World student or research scholar from Iran or China.

The same is true of information and news. Today there is worldwide clamor for information and news so that people become better informed. It constitutes one of the major points of the agenda for the propagation of freedom in the West. However, in the course of the U.S. attack against Iraq, during the presidency of George W. Bush, for a period of one week or more, all information was officially censored. They declared proudly that no reporter has any right to broadcast or publish any news or photographs about the U.S. offensive against Iraq. Everyone knew that the offensive had begun, and the Americans had also sent out the news. But no one knew the details, because it was claimed that disseminating this information would compromise military security. Military security limited the right to freedom. This was another material limit and restriction on freedom.

Consolidation of the foundations of the State imposes another limit. Four or five years ago a group emerged in the United States: all newspaper readers know about the Branch Davidian affair. I came to know about some more details at that time, and the news of the episode was published in our newspapers. It was a group following a certain cult that set itself against the present U.S. government during President Clinton's time. Certain security and military measures were taken against them that did not prove fruitful. Finally, they set fire to the building in which they were gathered. In this incident about eighty persons were burned alive. Photographs of the event were published and the whole world has seen

them. Among the eighty victims there were also women and children. Perhaps not one of them was a militiaman. See to what extent the right of life, the right to belief, and the right to political struggle were curtailed. Hence freedom in the materialistic Western world also has limits, with the difference that they are of a materialistic character.

There, moral values do not pose any limitation for freedom. For instance, the homosexual movement in the U.S. is one of their popular movements. They are even proud of it and hold rallies in the streets and publish their photographs in magazines. They mention with pride that such and such a businessman or statesman is a member of this group. No one is ashamed of it and no one denies it. Rather, some people who are opposed to homosexuality are severely attacked by some newspapers and periodicals and condemned as opponents of homosexuality. This means that ethical values pose absolutely no barrier to freedom.

Another example pertains to the European countries. For instance, they impose restrictions on freedom of expression and press on any propaganda in favor of fascism, which is again a matter of materialistic character relating to government. However, pornography, which is also one of their movements, is not restricted. That is, in western liberalism, on the basis of its philosophy and philosophical grounds, the limits on freedom are materialistic, not moral. However, in Islam there exist moral limits on freedom. In Islam there exist moral and spiritual limits beside material limits.

If someone holds heretical beliefs it is not objectionable. When we say that it is not objectionable, what is meant is that it is objectionable before God and before faithful human beings, but the government has no responsibility in regard to it. In a Muslim society there are Jews, Christians and persons belonging to various religious creeds. They exist at present in our country also, as they existed during the early Islamic era. This does not pose any problem. But if someone holding corrupt beliefs should make encroachments on the minds of other individuals who do not possess the power to defend themselves and try to mislead them, such efforts are prohibited.

Here freedom is limited. Such is the case from the viewpoint of Islam. If anyone tries to propagate corruption in political, sexual, or intellectual matters, such as the pseudo-philosophers who write articles suggesting that higher education is not beneficial for the youth, this must be prohibited. If they enumerate the inadequacies of higher education, of course, most probably, it would not have any effect on ninety percent, but it may possibly affect a ten percent of lethargic youths. They cannot be permitted to discourage people from higher studies by the means of insinuations and lies.

There is no freedom to lie in Islam and no freedom to spread rumors and create alarm. I have a complaint that no reference is made to Islamic sources and fundamentals in discussions relating to freedom. In the Quran, in the Sūra Al-Aḥzāb, āyah 60, it is stated that if the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is sickness and the alarmists do not desist, we will arouse you to take action against them. The alarmists are mentioned in this verse side by side with the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a sickness. The hypocrites are one group, those with sick hearts are a second group, and the alarmists are mentioned along with them. The alarmists are those who continuously intimidate the people. In a newly established Islamic society with so many enemies and the general mobilization brought about by the Quran and the Prophet, everyone should be mentally prepared for the defense of the Islamic country and its great human and popular system. But a group of rumormongers, like a plague, assault the people and they are the alarmists. The Quran says that if the alarmists, who constantly create general anxiety and stop the people from mobilization, do not desist, God will arouse the Prophet to take measures against them. Here is a limit on freedom. Hence from the Islamic viewpoint, there is another difference, which is that freedom has moral and spiritual limits.

There is yet another difference, namely that freedom in Western liberal thought is not consistent with duty and responsibility. Freedom means freedom from all duty. In Islam freedom is the counterpart of duty. Basically, human beings are free because they have responsibilities, and if they were not

responsible there would have been no need for freedom. They would have been like angels, in the words of Rumi:

*A Tradition says that the Glorious Creator
Made the creatures of three sorts:
A group was blessed with intellect, knowledge and generosity,
Another, of angels, knew nothing except adoration...*

It is characteristic of man that he is a collection of conflicting urges and motives. His duty is to traverse the path of perfection despite these various motives. He has been granted freedom to traverse the path of perfection. This freedom with its great value is for the sake of movement towards perfection, in the same way that human life itself is meant for perfection. "We did not create mankind and the jinn except for Our service." God created mankind and the jinn for the sake of reaching the rank of servitude, which is an exalted station. Freedom, like the right to life, is a prerequisite for God's service. In the West they have gone to such lengths in negating duty and responsibility that they rule out all religious and non-religious ideas and ideologies which involve do's and don'ts, duties and prohibitions. In the works of liberal American and quasi-American writers and their disciples and followers in other countries, including unfortunately our own, it is observed that they say that free Western thought is opposed to the ideas of do's and don'ts. Islam is diametrically opposed to this position. The position of Islam is that it considers freedom to be necessary by the side of duty so that man can fulfill his responsibilities with the means of his freedom, make great achievements, and make great choices so as to attain perfection.

Accordingly, my first suggestion to those who write and discuss issues is, let us be independent in our understanding of freedom. Let us think independently, without aping others. My second suggestion is that freedom should not be misused. Nowadays some people consistently repeat the phrase 'newly acquired press freedom.' In my view it does not refer to any fact. It is something whose sources are hostile foreign radios.

Of course, nowadays they write certain things in newspapers and periodicals and express hostile views. Some of these persons did not do this in the past. But some others did so in the past as well. In the past we have witnessed many instances of harsh criticism of the then-president and various officials and even dissent with the principles of the Revolution itself. But nobody bothered them.

Yes, there were some persons whose background was dubious and their hands were tainted. They did not dare to express their views. Even if they had done it nobody would have bothered them. They could have said the same things that they say today. Nobody would have stopped them. But they themselves were afraid because they had bad records. Their enmity towards the Revolution, of the Imam and the Imam's Islamic thought were known long since and they themselves lacked the courage to enter the field. However, after the last presidential elections they suddenly found the courage on the basis of a wrong analysis of those elections.

That wrong analysis was that they thought that 30 million people had voted against the system and this made them glad, whereas those 30 million had cast their vote for the sake of the consolidation of the system. One of the facts that constitutes a matter of pride for the Islamic system is that 18 years after the victory of the Revolution, 30 million out of 32 million eligible voters--that is about 90 percent--participated in that election. However, they considered this strong point of the system as a weak point.

Of course, from the very first days of the elections, foreign radios had raised a clamor in order to give a direction to those who were prone to this error, by insinuating that thirty million people has expressed discontent against the system. They wanted to project the system's strong point as a weak point and these poor guys believed it, and fooled themselves. They thought that in a country where 30 million people were opposed to the system, they, too, could come and express their views. Now they have found courage and express their opinions, whereas nothing in fact has changed. Had they committed any offense in the past and violated the logical limits they would

have been prosecuted. The same is the case today and nothing has changed. Today also the same measures will be taken against those who spread corruption and cause alarm. There has been no change. Accordingly, one should not say "newly acquired press freedom." We see that some officials repeatedly advise the press not to overuse their freedom because that would endanger freedom itself. What kind of logic is that? As much use as they make of freedom it is better. But they should not violate the limits. The more individuals make use of this God-given right, the nearer will it bring the Islamic system to its goals. Our complaint against the writers has always been as to why they did not write, investigate, and analyze as much as they should. The correct limits must, however, be observed. Of course, these limits are not something which a government or system determines in its own interest.

Even if there should be governments in the world, and there certainly are, which lay down such limits, the Islamic system is not such. The system of the Islamic Republic is based on justice. Should the leader violate the criteria of justice, he is automatically dismissed from leadership without the interference of any other agent. In such a system there is no meaning in setting limits in the interests of any group or clique or for imposing the views of a particular kind. The limits are Islamic limits, the same things as are stated in the Qur'an and hadith and recognized as such by a correct understanding of Islam. These are valid, and they should be observed. If they are not observed, it is the duty of the authorities, judicial and executive, as well as Ministry of Guidance and others to monitor their observance. Should they fail to carry out this responsibility, they will have committed an offense and a sin. They are responsible to see that these limits are observed. Within these limits, the luminous principle of freedom must be used. I do not like these irresponsible statements to be repeated.

To sum up, what I wish to say today is that the concept of freedom is an Islamic conception and we should think about it in Islamic terms and have faith in its fruits as an Islamic movement and responsibility. We should consider that which

exists today on the plane of society as an opportunity, and make maximum use of this opportunity. Thinkers and scholars should increase their efforts. Of course, there are some topics that are for specialized journals and forums. But there are other topics that are of a general interest and all can benefit from such discussions.

I hope that God the Exalted will provide us with the opportunity to witness the blossoming of this system and the ever greater success of this great and dear nation, and it is hoped that you, university community, especially the youth, on whom the country's hopes and future depend, will play a great role in its blossoming.

Greetings be upon you and Allah's mercy and blessings.

To the Youth in Europe and North America

The recent events in France and similar ones in some other Western countries have convinced me to directly talk to you about them. I am addressing you, [the youth], not because I overlook your parents, rather it is because the future of your nations and countries will be in your hands; and also I find that the sense of quest for truth is more vigorous and attentive in your hearts.

I don't address your politicians and statesmen either in this writing because I believe that they have consciously separated the route of politics from the path of righteousness and truth.

I would like to talk to you about Islam, particularly the image that is presented to you as Islam. Many attempts have been made over the past two decades, almost since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, to place this great religion in the seat of a horrifying enemy. The provocation of a feeling of horror and hatred and its utilization has unfortunately a long record in the political history of the West.

Here, I don't want to deal with the different phobias with which the Western nations have thus far been indoctrinated. A cursory review of recent critical studies of history would bring home to you the fact that the Western governments' insincere and hypocritical treatment of other nations and cultures has been censured in new historiographies.

The histories of the United States and Europe are ashamed of slavery, embarrassed by the colonial period and chagrined at the oppression of people of color and non-Christians. Your researchers and historians are deeply ashamed of the bloodsheds wrought in the name of religion between the Catholics and Protestants or in the name of nationality and ethnicity during the First and Second World Wars. This approach is admirable.

By mentioning a fraction of this long list, I don't want to reproach history; rather I would like you to ask your intellectuals as to why the public conscience in the West awakens and comes to its senses after a delay of several decades or centuries. Why should the revision of collective conscience apply to the distant past and not to the current problems? Why is it that attempts are made to prevent public awareness regarding an important issue such as the treatment of Islamic culture and thought?

You know well that humiliation and spreading hatred and illusionary fear of the "other" have been the common base of all those oppressive profiteers. Now, I would like you to ask yourself why the old policy of spreading "phobia" and hatred has targeted Islam and Muslims with an unprecedented intensity. Why does the power structure in the world want Islamic thought to be marginalized and remain latent? What concepts and values in Islam disturb the programs of the super powers and what interests are safeguarded in the shadow of distorting the image of Islam? Hence, my first request is: Study and research the incentives behind this widespread tarnishing of the image of Islam.

My second request is that in reaction to the flood of prejudgments and disinformation campaigns, try to gain a direct and firsthand knowledge of this religion. The right logic requires that you understand the nature and essence of what they are frightening you about and want you to keep away from.

I don't insist that you accept my reading or any other reading of Islam. What I want to say is: Don't allow this dynamic and effective reality in today's world to be introduced to you through resentments and prejudices. Don't allow them to hypocritically introduce their own recruited terrorists as representatives of Islam.

Receive knowledge of Islam from its primary and original sources. Gain information about Islam through the Qur'an and the life of its great Prophet. I would like to ask you whether you have directly read the Qur'an of the Muslims. Have you studied the teachings of the Prophet of Islam and his humane,

ethical doctrines? Have you ever received the message of Islam from any sources other than the media?

Have you ever asked yourself how and on the basis of which values has Islam established the greatest scientific and intellectual civilization of the world and raised the most distinguished scientists and intellectuals throughout several centuries?

I would like you not to allow the derogatory and offensive image-buildings to create an emotional gulf between you and the reality, taking away the possibility of an impartial judgment from you. Today, the communication media have removed the geographical borders. Hence, don't allow them to besiege you within fabricated and mental borders.

Although no one can individually fill the created gaps, each one of you can construct a bridge of thought and fairness over the gaps to illuminate yourself and your surrounding environment. While this preplanned challenge between Islam and you, the youth, is undesirable, it can raise new questions in your curious and inquiring minds. Attempts to find answers to these questions will provide you with an appropriate opportunity to discover new truths.

Therefore, don't miss the opportunity to gain proper, correct and unbiased understanding of Islam so that hopefully, due to your sense of responsibility toward the truth, future generations would write the history of this current interaction between Islam and the West with a clearer conscience and lesser resentment.